



O P E R A O M N I A V O L . V I I I

RAIMON PANIKKAR

TRINITARIAN AND  
COSMOTHEANDRIC  
VISION

VOLUME VIII

2

3

# **Opera Omnia**

*Volume VIII*

**Trinitarian and Cosmotheandric Vision**

# Opera Omnia

## I. Mysticism and Spirituality

Part 1: Mysticism, Fullness of Life

Part 2: Spirituality, the Way of Life

## II. Religion and Religions

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## SERIES FOREWORD

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This *Opera Omnia* ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Siva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, *karman*, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying *scripta manent*, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live out Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Sante Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this *Opera Omnia*, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitted their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

1. In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.
2. Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.
3. Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.
4. The publisher's preference for the *Opera Omnia* to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original written works.

I thank my various translators, who have rendered the various languages I have happened to write in into the spirit of multiculturalism—which I believe is ever relevant in a world where cultures encounter each other in mutual enrichment, provided they do not mislay their specificity. I am particularly grateful to Milena Carrara Pavan, to whom I have entrusted the publication of all my written works, which she knows deeply, having been at my side in dedication and sensitivity during the last twenty years of my life.

*R.P.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Hindū Scriptures*

<i>AB</i>	<i>Aitareya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>AU</i>	<i>Aitareya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva-veda</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>CU</i>	<i>Chāndogya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KaivU</i>	<i>Kaivalya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KausU</i>	<i>Kauṣītaki-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KenU</i>	<i>Kena-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MaitU</i>	<i>Maitrī-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MandU</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>RV</i>	<i>R̥g-veda</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Satapatha-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>SU</i>	<i>Svetāśvatara-upaniṣad</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Taittirīya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>YS</i>	<i>Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali</i>

### *Christian Scriptures*

<i>Acts</i>	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
<i>1 Cor</i>	<i>First Letter to the Corinthians</i>
<i>De</i>	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Eph</i>	<i>Letter to the Ephesians</i>
<i>Gal</i>	<i>Letter to the Galatians</i>
<i>Gen</i>	<i>Genesis</i>
<i>Isa</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>Jas</i>	<i>James</i>
<i>Jn</i>	<i>John</i>
<i>Lk</i>	<i>Luke</i>
<i>Mk</i>	<i>Mark</i>
<i>Mt</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
<i>Prov</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>



Ps	Psalms
Qo	Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)
Song	Song of Songs
1 Th	First Letter to the Thessalonians
Ws	Wisdom

*Others*

<i>Denz.-Schon.</i>	<i>H. J. D. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolarum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, A. Schönmetzer (ed.), Barcinone: Herder, 1973</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Migne, J.-P. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, Paris, 1857–66</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Migne, J.-P. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Paris, 1844–55</i>

## INTRODUCTION

The ambition of this study is to present, albeit in a very schematic form, a vision of reality, a cosmivision that differs from the prevailing cosmology of today's dominant culture.

The trinitarian vision of reality, indeed, is not limited to the conception that is usually called Christian: it is much wider and more universal. Humanity has always been aware, with greater or lesser clarity, of a Mystery that is higher, transcendent, or immanent in Man.

The pages that follow dare to speak about this reality that we call Mystery.

If we listen to how humanity has expressed its understanding of itself and of the universe we can discern three great visions: the *monist* vision, the pluralist vision (in the final analysis a *dualist* vision), and the *a-dualist* vision.

From a metaphysical perspective the three definitions point to three great cosmovisions of human history.

### The Monist Vision

The human spirit yearns to decipher the mystery that surrounds it and uses its intelligence to do so. Human intelligence has concentrated on one of its functions: reason. Reason is more practical than pure intellect because it is able to understand things by discovering their concatenation (logic) and thus to succeed in manipulating them. Pure intellect, on the other hand, concentrates on the inner light (intelligibility) that is proper to everything.

In order to understand, reason must reduce to uniformity the data with which it is presented. Therefore it must reduce data to a concept. Faced with the complex diversity of Reality, reason resorts to ever more general and abstract concepts. Thus, reason leads us to the unity of the concept of Being, or of something equivalent. Being is one, the One, or simply Reality or what is—to gloss over the various and important philosophical distinctions. Reason, to be clear, requires the *reductio ad unum*, as the Scholastics said. No matter how much effort we spend on analogy or dialectics, there will always be a *primum analogatum*, a primary concept that allows us to apply the same analogy to different concepts or a “synthesis” that enables us to embrace the dialectics of opposites. If we want to understand Reality rationally, we shall have to arrive at monism via numerous modalities that we introduce to distinguish distinct Beings. They will be only modalities. In short, unless we want to renounce rationality we shall have to affirm that ultimately everything is God or Being or Spirit or Matter or Energy or Nothingness.

### The Dualist Vision

Whether by good sense, intuition, or human instincts, some philosophers have ended up renouncing a final synthesis and have remained in a philosophical pluralism that in the end is reduced to dualism between the two great spheres of reality—the material and the spiritual—and this is metaphysical dualism. So-called ontological pluralism (not to be confused with the religious pluralism of present-day debate), by admitting a plurality of entities—like

"atomism," for example—also requires a mental nexus that is conscious of the plurality, so that it is ultimately reduced to the aforementioned dualism.

These are the two major options with which human thought presents us. Neither of them, however, is exempt from serious difficulties, as history itself shows. The pure rationality of monism seems to suffocate Man, who is something more than mere reason. Pure dualism, if it is to avoid renouncing rationality, must admit the provisional nature of divergences and hurl us toward a future or an eschatology in which "God" will be all in all, the "good" will triumph over the wicked, the "class struggle" will manage to eliminate human inequalities, "capitalism" will bring well-being to all, "science" will find the answer to unsolved puzzles, the "spirit" will conquer matter, the totality of atoms will form a "superatomic" world, politics will finally be human, religion will explain everything, and so on. The temporal framework is always the same: the future has the solution—and the consolation, when one believes in it.

If monism grants preeminence to the static, the immutable, and the absolute, then dualism tends toward the dynamic, to change, and to temporariness. In both cases it is a flight from irrationality as the number-one enemy. Man cannot renounce his quest for meaning in life and for finding his place in the cosmos. Neither agnosticism nor skepticism is averse to the rational maintenance of its own respective attitudes. Since the enigma of the universe cannot be unveiled, it is more rational to abstain from ultimate explanations: this is what these schools of thought tell us. The monism-dualism dilemma seems unable to admit a middle way if rationality is to be saved.

### The A-Dualist Vision

If we do not reduce our meditation on the human condition to what just one culture tells us, we discover that other cosmovisions have believed they found a way out of the dilemma to which we have alluded between monism and dualism. It is the a-dualist or *advaita* vision, which constitutes the key to the pages of this study.

The great demand made by the a-dualist vision on the mind that has configured modern culture (which we can no longer only call Western) consists precisely in the call to overcome rationalism without falling into irrationalism on one side or supernaturalism on the other.

The challenge of the a-dualist approach to reality represents a mutation in the very foundations of the dominant culture that has created contemporary civilization, based on the separation between knowledge and love. *Advaita* cannot be accepted with the intellect alone; it also requires love. Man does not aspire only to finding *Truth*, which means comprehending—and Heidegger could be the modern symbol of this. Man also aspires to the Good, which means incarnation, realization; today's symbol could be Levinas. What is needed is a *hieros gamos*, a "sacred marriage" between Knowledge and Love.

An example of this challenge is the cosmotheandric vision, which we attempt to describe in the last part of our study.

This vision tells us that reality is not formed from a single, indistinct block—whether it be divine, spiritual, or material—but neither is it formed from three blocks or a world on three levels—the world of the Gods (or of Transcendence), the world of Men (or of Consciousness), and the physical world (or that of Matter), as though it were a building on three floors. Reality is made up of three dimensions in relation with one another—the Trinitarian *perichirêsis*—so that not only does one not exist without the other, but all three are inter-in-dependently entwined. Either God or the World, or equally Man, if taken separately or in themselves, without relation to the other dimensions of Reality, are simply abstractions of our mind. This

cosmotheandric intuition, I believe, resolves a series of antinomies that the modern mind seems unable to get rid of. It could constitute the basis for a new vision of reality.

The first section is devoted to a general study on Deity and a more specific one on its faces (parts 1 and 2). The second section provides, in its first part, a comment on the Christian Trinity, and has seen numerous revisions, as this topic represents the cornerstone of the author's Christian vision: the living God is the Trinitarian God, which is not rigid monotheism or polytheism, just as Christianity is not just its doctrine; in the second part I present Man as a trinitarian Being in the anthropological, Hellenic, and cosmic vision and his responsibility within the cosmos.

To sum up the whole issue, in the third section I introduce a wider vision, the cosmotheandric reality, described first in its general aspect and then in its form of spirituality.

I need not underline the importance of this volume, dealing as it does with the universal vision of Man as microcosm and image of the Whole; it is a vision that recognizes in Man his dignity in relation to God and the Cosmos.



**SECTION I**  
**ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE**



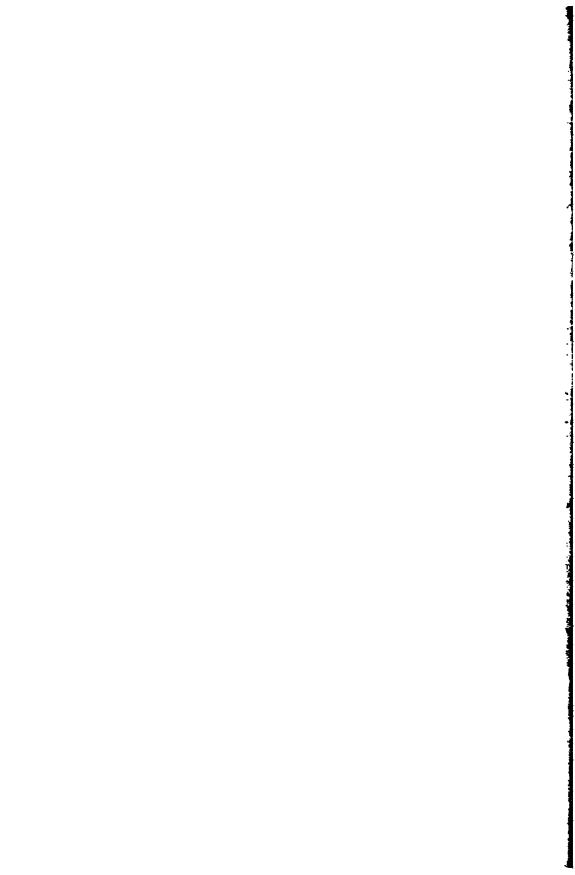
## **Part One**

### **DEITY\***

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\* This chapter was originally written as the entry to "Diety" in M. Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* IV (New York, Macmillan, 1985), 264–276.





## INTRODUCTION

As a symbol, Deity represents the human struggle at its highest; it represents Man's effort to discover his identity in confrontation with the limits of his universe. Deity is the symbol of what transcends the Human being and the symbol of what lies hidden most deeply within him. While other creatures merely accept their environments as a given, Man exists as such only when he realizes both his solidarity with the universe and his distinction from it. In his journey toward self-identity, Man encounters Deity. In a cross-cultural context, Deity symbolizes the transcendence of all the limitations of human consciousness and the movement of the human spirit toward self-identity through its encounter with the ultimate. Deity symbolizes Man's knowledge that he is neither alone nor the ultimate master of his fate. And yet this knowledge, dim though it may be, associates Man with this same Deity. Deity both transcends and envelops man; it is inseparable from Man's awareness of his own identity, yet is always elusive, hidden, and for some, seemingly nonexistent.



## THE POLYSEMY OF THE WORD

Deity is a word with a diversity of meanings. It is an ambiguous and often polemical word. The different interpretations it has been given show that it is also a relative word.

### Ambiguity

The word *Deity* is ambiguous. It is not a proper name. It is not even a common name, since its possible referents are hardly homogeneous. It is the product of many and heterogeneous abstractions. Most names referring to divine Beings or the divine were originally common names singled out in a peculiar way. What was general became specific, concrete, and, like a single Being, evocative of emotion. Thus *Allāh* probably comes from *al-illāh*, that is, "the God." *Njinyi* or *Nnui*, the name for God among the Bamum of Cameroon, means "he who is everywhere"—and thus is at once concrete and elusive. *YHWH* means "he who is" (or "he who shall be"), which becomes Being par excellence for Christian Scholasticism. *Śiva* means "auspicious, benign, kind," and for the faithful represents the highest symbol of the Deity stripped of all its attributes.

In short, there are Gods called *Allāh*, *Nnui*, *YHWH*, and *Śiva*: but there is no God called Deity. One worships Viṣṇu or the Buddha, but one does not worship Deity as such: one can only worship a particular Deity. Within religious traditions we often speak of "major" and "minor" deities. The word *Deity*, in short, is more abstract than the word *God*.

In Western antiquity, in the Middle Ages and up to the present, *Deity* in its adjectival or pronominal form is a word often applied to creatures without any theological implications. Indeed, activities and individuals are called *divine* because they partake in Deity, but in a way in which they would not be said to partake in God. Writers on spiritual matters or popular heroes are called "divines" in many languages. The word simply denotes a character of (divine) excellence, which many creatures can share.

The word *God* was also originally a common noun, but soon became the proper name of the one God of the theists (and also of the atheists, for many atheists are merely antitheists; both live within the mythical horizon of the one personal God, accepting or rejecting it). It is only by extension that scholars speak, for example, of the African Gods or debate the nature of supreme Beings or similar figures.

In any case, *Deity* is not identical with *God*. One does not believe in Deity in the individualized sense in which one may believe in God. Yet one may accept that there is something referred to by the word *Deity*. The referent will always retain a certain mystery and show certain features of freedom, infinity, immanence, transcendence, or the like. For some, this mysterious entity constitutes the highest example of superstition, primitivism, and unevolved consciousness, and represents a pretext for exploiting others under the menace of a terrible but purely imaginary power. The ambiguity of the word is therefore notable.

### Polemical Use

At the same time, *Deity* is also a polemical word. It has sometimes been used against some conceptions of God, but without implying a complete rejection of the divine. The philosophical deism of recent centuries in Europe, which developed a concept of the divine more congenial to the natural sciences emerging at the time than to the idea of a personal God, could serve as an example. The Deity of the deists was to substitute for and correct the *theos* of the theists without discarding the belief in the existence of some supreme Being or first Cause. Yet this eighteenth-century polemic was not new. Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 46–119 CE), the prolific Greek writer-philosopher at Delphi, is our first source for the word *theotēs*, which he uses in his polemic against the mythological interpretations of historical heroes as they appeared in the work of Euhemerus of Messene (c. 300 BCE). The word *theotēs* appears only once in the New Testament (Col 2:9) and is translated in the oldest Latin versions as *deitas*, whereas the Vulgate uses the more current *divinitas*—a word unknown before Cicero (106–43 BCE). In Romans 1:20 we find the word *theiotes*, derived from the adjective *theios* and again translated as *divinitas* in the Vulgate.

But the word *Deity* is not only polemical with regard to a personal conception of God. It is polemical also as the symbol of a certain political use of the divine. We should not forget the wars of religion; the attempts to legitimize power and the use of violence in the name of God, Gods, or Deity; and the justification adopted by some ideologies through mottos like "In God we trust" or "Gott mit uns." *Deity* has been all too often the cause of strife and war, sometimes under the guise of peace.

### Relativity

From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge, the modern use of the word *Deity* could be interpreted as the Western effort to open up a broader horizon than that of a monotheistic God but without breaking continuity with tradition. *God* was a common name. It became a proper name: the God of Abraham. It was then that this *God* came to designate the one God, which Muslims and Christians wanted to propagate all over the world. All the others were "mere" Gods or, at most, inappropriate names for the true God.

It is interesting to observe how Western scholars today try to disentangle themselves from their monolithic and colonial mentality. Is the word *Deity* the last bulwark of this attitude?

We can draw two opposing conclusions from the apparently paradoxical proposition that this word expresses both the most accessible and the most elusive aspects of "divine" reality: everything that exists shares a divine character; or nothing of what exists, not even the totality of things, embodies or exhausts the divine. In short, the word says everything, every thing, and also says nothing, no thing. One legitimate conclusion from this ambiguity may be that one should avoid the word altogether or speak of deities in the plural in the sense of specific superhuman—that is, divine—entities.

There is another possible conclusion, however. Precisely because of its polysemic nature, the word *Deity* may be a fundamental category for the study and understanding of religion. The subject of religion would then be related to Deity, and not just to God or to the Gods. Polysemy, in fact, does not necessarily mean confusion; it can mean richness of meanings or variety of senses. *Deity* could then become a true name—that is, a symbol not yet eroded by habit, rather than a univocal concept.

I should now try to describe the scope of the symbol "*Deity*"—to do this, I analyze the various methodological approaches to this symbol in its broadest aspect. Then I examine

the structure of Deity by analyzing the different avenues, contexts, and perspectives within which Deity has been studied. I then mention the structure of human consciousness when it is in relation to Deity. Further I briefly compare Deity with other equally broad categories in order to get a more detailed picture, and finally I summarize my findings.

## AN APPROACH TO DEITY

This work does not deal with the conception of God as it is generally understood in the Western world, and so there is no need to discuss, for example, atheism or the nature of God. Furthermore, the comparative and multicultural perspective of this study requires that the viewpoints of other cultures be integrated with our own and not simply reported. Nevertheless, we are engaged in what is predominantly a Western activity: adopting a perspective starting from one tradition (as indicated by the very use of the word *Deity*) and expanding it in order to achieve a more universal viewpoint.

### Linguistic Observations

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) advises us that “Deity appears only in the highest manifestations of thought.” We must bear in mind from the outset that discourse on Deity is unique, because the locus of Deity is beyond both the things of the senses and the things of the intellect. Yet the path toward Deity belongs to the dynamic of our intellect. This is expressed in the first sentence of the *Brahma-sūtra*: *Athāto brahmajijñāsā* (“Behold then the desire to know *brahman*”). The text refers to “desiderative knowledge” or the “desire to know” (*jijñāsā*), which arises out of an existential condition (*atha*). It liberates us from the weight of individuality (*ahankāra*), enabling us to rise up to the search for Deity. The process follows both an existential and an intellectual path, with no separation between pure and practical reason. Deity is as much at the beginning as at the end of the human quest—and also in between. The search requires pureness of spirit, strength of will, and a radical change of life.

While speaking of Deity we have already had occasion to refer to God, and now we have introduced *brahman*. Do these words designate the same “thing”? Or at least do they have the same meaning?

*Brahman* is certainly not the one true and living God of the Abrahamic tradition. Nor can it be said that Shangdi or *kami* are the same as *brahman*. And yet these three objects are not totally unrelated. Can we then conclude that all those names refer to Deity as a broad category? Is *Deity* perhaps the common name for God, the divine, *brahman*, *mana*, and so forth?

To begin with, it must be stressed that *brahman* and God, for example, are not the same thing. The one is passive, does not have care of anything, is at the bottom of everything, and constitutes the condition of existence for all that exists.

The other is active and provident; it is above everything, it is personal, and it is the creator of all that is. But they are not so different as to make the translation of the one by the other totally inaccurate. Christian tradition, while affirming the ineffability of divine names, did not deny that some names are in fact more applicable than others. We shall call *brahman* and God homeomorphic equivalents, because they perform corresponding yet different functions in their respective systems.

It would be tempting to use the word *Deity* as an abstract noun for all such homeomorphic equivalents. *Deity* would then refer to God, *kami*, *brahman*, Zeus, Rudra, T'ien, *tao*, El, Baal, Urd, Re, Kāli, and so on. This enterprise is relatively simple as long as we remain within more or less homologous cultures, making it easier to find common properties like infinity, omniscience, goodness, immutability, omnipotence, simplicity, unity, and so on. But when we attempt to include such properties as futurity, nothingness, or illusion, we find that these attributes are not common at all; in fact they are incompatible with the previous ones. In reality the only common structure is the purely formal one that indicates something indefinite—different from and perhaps superior to human beings, though sometimes only apparently so. *Deity* would then be a purely formal concept with no significant content whatsoever.

We may note the tendency, common especially in the West, to universalize what is familiar, as in the following statements: "The Christian God is an absolute value for everyone. Modern technology is suitable for the whole world. The natural sciences are universally valid. Truth is universal." We shall have to avoid such claims if we are to take other cultures as seriously as we take Western cultures. The word *Deity* does not encompass all that other traditions have said about what in one group of cultures can be rendered by *Deity*. Were we to use the term *brahman* or *kami* instead of *Deity*, our meaning would change. As the context is different, so the results would be different. Therefore we must be very careful in making extrapolations and avoid generalizations that are not warranted by the self-understanding of the different cultures of the world.

With these preliminary warnings in mind, we can now examine the distinction between God and *Deity*. This distinction was known to medieval Christianity and was given clear expression by, for example, Meister Eckhart. *Deity* is as far from God as heaven is from earth. It represents the inner and passive aspect of the divine mystery and is related to the *Deus absconditus* that was much commented upon by the church fathers. God, on the other hand, constitutes the outer and active aspect of the same mystery. We, however, shall use the word *Deity* to mean not just the essence of God (as in Thomas Aquinas) or the "God beyond God" or the foundation of God (as in Eckhart), but simply the elusive dimension, though present everywhere, which only the highest human experience can glimpse and which is the goal of our quest.

The word *Deity*, then, not only denotes God or the Gods as substantial Beings but may also be used as a generic name indicating all those forces, energies, entities, ideas, powers, and the like that come from a reality that is "above" or "beyond" the human world. In this sense *Deity* represents the element of reality that belongs neither to the material world nor to the purely human one, but is above and beyond the sensible and intellectual order. *Deity* therefore stands for one of the three dimensions of reality that practically all human traditions have conceived. First, there is the realm of heaven: the Gods, the superhuman powers, the supra-intelligible. Then there is the human world: consciousness, ethics, life, the mind, the intelligible, and so forth. And finally the earthly world: the cosmos, matter, spatio-temporal reality, the sensible, and so on.

We cannot proceed further in the study of the human approach to *Deity* until we examine the nature of the "object" we are trying to investigate. For now it is not important to establish whether the world of *Deity* is the paradigm of the human world, in which case the latter would be only a shadow of the real, or whether the divine universe is a mere projection of the unfulfilled desires of Men. The fact remains that the human experience manifested through language witnesses to the existence of such a divine world, be it populated by *daimones* or by *theoi*, by *devas*, *elohim*, spirits of all kinds, the one God, or by nobody. Do we have a common



name to designate that universe? Can we say that this is the world of Deity? To answer these questions we need a historical interlude.

### Historical Observations

How did Men arrive at the notion of Deity? Some scholars say this notion was the result of an inference of some kind of causal reasoning. Deity, in this case, is a supreme Being or Beings, of a celestial or other kind. The human question about the origin of life and the world leads to the search for a cause that then will be "located" in whatever place appears to be more appropriate for the dwelling of a supreme Being, whether in heaven or on earth. Other scholars, however, see the origin of Deity not so much in intellectual research as in the existential anxiety of Man as he faces the fundamental mysteries of life and nature. Others, again, believe the search for Deity is not founded on a causal thought or a sentiment of anxiety but on simple awareness.

For others still, Man arrived at the idea of Deity through revelation by a supreme Being, which showed itself of its own autonomous initiative. If such a supreme Being exists, even if its "revelation" is only gradual and linked to the intellectual development of the individuals concerned, it is always from its power that the first step in the process comes.

Contemporary debate is the consequence of the great controversies of the past over the origin of the idea of God, controversies that sprang from the conflict of more modern theories of evolution with traditional beliefs about God. Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954), for example, rejected the evolutionary scheme and searched among primitive peoples for traces of the original revelation of a "primordial monotheism." Schmidt was developing the insights of Andrew Lang (1844–1912), who had argued for the existence of faith in supreme Beings among ancient peoples, in opposition to the then predominant theory of primitive animism, represented by Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917). Finally, the various atheist movements—scientific, dialectical, or historical—will make of Deity a superfluous hypothesis, an artificial tool for the subjection of Men, an unwarranted extrapolation of our ignorance or a mere illusion to console us in our impotency.

It seems fair to say that the most universal, primordial human experience is not monotheistic, but neither is it atheistic or polytheistic; it is rather a deep-rooted faith in a divine world, a world populated by different kinds of superhuman beings or forces. Whether those Beings are one or many, whether they represent a polytheistic hierarchy or an *Urmonotheismus*, is not actually the fundamental question. What is most important is that these beliefs express a human experience according to which Man is not alone in the universe and the sensible world does not represent the whole of reality in existence. This is demonstrated not only by the innumerable oral traditions and written texts in nearly every culture but also by the existence of a veritable jungle of names for the divine. All human languages, in fact, have an enormous quantity of words denoting the superhuman or extra-human realm. It belongs to a second moment of human reflection to attempt to give order to that complex world, to assign to it its degrees of reality and decide what kind of hierarchy reigns there, and to clarify the relationship between that world, the human world, and the rest of the universe. In a primordial culture one does not worry about proving the existence of Deity: the Gods are just there.

## THE STRUCTURE OF DEITY

Historical investigation is only a part of the question about Deity. How many people have come to this idea is less important than the structure of the idea itself. This structure is not an "objective" datum, however; it is, at least in part, a function of human interest. We have here an example of how any human initiative is motivated and conditioned by interests of Men and prevailing myth. Indeed, since Deity has no detectable referent outside human consciousness, its structure depends on the individual's opinions about it and on those of any human consciousness for which the notion itself makes sense. In other words, what Deity is is inseparable from what Men believe it to be.

We must try then to make sense of the ideas and experiences humanity has had on the subject. For this we need to understand the context in which the problem has been posed. This leads us to distinguish between the various methods that can be employed to clarify the question and the horizons within which the problem of Deity is set. The main methods are theological, anthropological, and philosophical. They are all interrelated, and distinguishing them clearly is really just a question of emphasis. The horizons of the problem consist of the conjectures we make about what we are looking for when we pose questions about Deity and its origins. These horizons are a function of our universe and of the myths that guide our existence. I shall try to distinguish three such horizons; combining these with the methods just mentioned would give nine different kinds of notion about Deity. Brevity requires, however, that I do not develop all nine of these representations of the divine; I shall describe only the three fundamental horizons, which in fact fully predetermine the question of Deity.

### Horizons

In order to understand what kind of Deity we are talking about, it is essential to reflect first on the horizon of the question. Is the Deity to be conceived as absolute consciousness? As a supreme Being? As the perfect, ideal individual? Or as the creator of the world? In short, where do we situate the divine? Where is the locus of Deity? The horizons are, of course, dependent on the culture of the time and the place. From a structural point of view, however, the function of Deity always seems to constitute an ultimate point of reference. We may situate this point outside the universe or at its center, in the depths of Man (in his mind or heart), or simply nowhere. Cosmology, anthropology, and ontology represent the three main horizons.

#### *The Metacosmological Horizon*

In ancient times Man lived facing the world: his main concern was the universe as a human habitat. Man's vision was directed toward the things of Heaven and of Earth. The horizon

of Deity is indeed the universe, but intended as a "metacosmological" place, completely different from every other place.

Deity is thus placed in relation to the world. Certainly, it may be conceived as immanent to the world, or more often transcendent to it, but Deity is the Deity of the world, and the world is the world of Deity. Establishing what kind of function or functions Deity is supposed to perform and what kind of relation it has with the world is a task for traditional cosmologies. In any case, Deity is a kind of pole to the world, a prime mover that sets the world in motion, sustains it, directs it, and often creates it.

We can express the same concept using a temporal metaphor. In this case, Deity is configured as the beginning, prior to the Big Bang, or as the end of the evolution of the physical universe, as the omega point. And Deity may be both alpha and omega, at the beginning and at the end of the universe.

The most common name for this kind of Deity is "God," whether this be Varuṇa, "supreme lord, ruling the spheres" (*RV* I.25.20), or YHWH who "made heaven and earth" (*Gen* 1:1). This God is "that from which truly all Beings are born, by which when born they live and into which they will return" (*TU* III.1). This God is the *Pantokrator* of many traditions, Eastern and Western. Even the *deus otiosus* belongs to this group. Here, then, Deity is a metacosmological category, whose most salient feature is its infinity. The world we experience is contingent, and all things are transient and finite. Only Deity is infinite.

### *The Meta-Anthropological Horizon*

At a certain moment in his history, Man's main interest was no longer nature and the mysterious outside world, placed above him, but Man himself. His attention turned toward the inner recesses of the human spirit: his feelings and his mind. The locus of Deity in this case is the human world—not just a world that is made broader, but one that must be deeper as well. It is a meta-anthropological place.

Here Deity is seen as the symbol for the perfection of the human being. The notion of Deity is given not so much as the fruit of reflection on the cosmos or as an experience of its numinous nature, but rather as the consequence of an anthropological self-awareness. Deity is the fullness of the human heart, the true destiny of man, the guide of the peoples, the beloved of the mystics, the lord of history, the complete fulfillment of what we really are. This kind of Deity does not need to be anthropomorphic, although it may sometimes present some anthropomorphic traits. Deity is here ātman-brahman, the fully divinized man, the Christ, the *puruṣa*, or even the symbol of justice, of peace, or of a happy society. Deity may be considered immanent or transcendent, identified with or distinguished from Man, but its functions are in relation to the human being. It is a living, loving Deity that threatens, inspires, provides, punishes, rewards, and forgives. In this Deity every pilgrimage ends, every longing disappears, every thought ceases, and every sin is erased. Thus Deity is a meta-anthropological category.

The vexed problems of divine personality belong here, as do psychological analyses of human faith in Deity. The most typical feature of this horizon, however, is the attribute of freedom. Deity is freedom itself and liberates Man from his often painful limitations. Also in this horizon are modern liberation theologies and the notion of a God who acts in history.

### *The Metaontological Horizon*

It is generally held that the culmination of human evolution is self-awareness. The power of reflection makes *Homo sapiens* the superior Being that he believes himself to be. The locus

of Deity, in this case, cannot be just a superman or a foundation of the world: it has to be a superbeing. The locus is therefore "metaontological."

Man is proud of his power of abstraction. Deity is here not only beyond the physical world but outside any natural realm, including that of the human world, the intellect, desires, and the will. Deity is totally above and beyond nature, including human nature. The transcendence or otherness of Deity is here so absolute that it transcends itself to the point that it can no longer be called transcendence. Deity, then, does not exist; it is metaontological, beyond Being. But neither is it nonexistent: the apophatism is absolute. Deity neither is nor exists, nor is it thinkable or expressible. Silence is the only suitable attitude toward it, not because we are incapable of speaking about it but because silence is what befits it. This silence neither hides nor reveals. It says nothing because there is nothing to say. Possible names for this Deity are *śūnyatā*, neither Being nor "Non-Being," *Hyperon*, and so on. This kind of Deity is therefore a metaontological reality. Seen from below, as it were, it belongs to the unthinkable; seen from within, it belongs to the unthought. To think about it would be idolatry.

Here we run into the problem of the nothingness of Deity, the radical apophatism developed in many traditions. The predominant feature here comprises immanence and transcendence, two coexistent features. Deity is the immanence and transcendence inherent in the heart of every Being.

We should hasten to add that these three horizons are not mutually exclusive. Many thinkers of different traditions have tried to describe a concept of Deity embracing all three. Within Hinduism, for instance, *nirguṇa-brahman* would correspond to the third kind of horizon, *saṃguṇa-brahman* to the first, and *Īśvara* might be the personal Deity of the individual believer. Similarly, the Christian tradition tries to combine God as prime mover (the first kind), with the personal God of believers (the second), and that of the mystics (the third). How far all three can be reduced to an intelligible unity is a philosophical and theological problem that different traditions try to solve in different ways.

The morphological traits of Deity can be organized according to these three horizons, suggesting a threefold structure for Deity. The ultimate experience of metaontological Deity is the character of the "I." Deity is the ultimate "I," the final subject of activity. "Who am I?" The "I" that can respond to this question without further questioning is the ultimate "I," the Deity.

Meta-anthropological Deity represents the experience of the "thou." In the human drive toward Deity it appears as the ultimate "thou," with whom dialogue and human relations can be established.

Deity as the ultimate cause and prime mover of the world is the "he, she, or it" that only an inference can reveal. One speaks of this Deity always in the third person.

### Methods

We can now turn to the different methods used in the attempt to understand Deity. Whatever Deity may be, it is neither a sensible nor an intelligible thing. Deity is neither a visible thing nor a mere thought.

Modern hermeneutics speaks of "pre-understanding" as a necessary condition of understanding, and of a "hermeneutical circle" that is needed in all interpretation. Within the realm of sensible and intelligible objects we can state what pre-understanding is. We acquire an idea of the whole, which we may modify while examining the parts. It is on the basis of this pre-understanding that a given method is applied to understanding an object. But how can this be done in the case of Deity? If every method implies a proleptic leap into the object under consideration, a return to the starting point, and then a methodical process that follows, it

is difficult to see how such a method can be applied in our attempt to understand Deity. We do not know in which direction to make the first leap or what instruments to use—unless we start from received tradition or on the basis of an authentic mystical experience. But this amounts to forsaking a research method for Deity and replacing it with investigative methods that simply interpret people's opinions on it. We know, moreover, that if we start with certain "instruments" the results will largely depend on the nature of those instruments. So we cannot make the first leap (as we do not know the direction) and we cannot go back (since the object is beyond the senses and the intellect). In short, the research method for seeking the Deity is *sui generis*—if indeed there is a method at all.

How do we come to a pre-understanding of Deity? We may, for example, receive it from tradition. In the case of a direct mystical experience, by contrast, it is not really a matter of pre-understanding but an immediate intuition that the mystic later manifests in terms of the culture in which he lives; ultimately it comes to the same thing. The mystic has more need of a post-understanding, as it were, in terms of his time and culture, which actually equates to an initial pre-understanding for all the others. The pre-understanding of Deity is, therefore, a traditional given. Now, there are three main attitudes toward this given. If we accept it as a starting point and proceed to a critical effort at understanding it, this is the *theological method*. The theologian tries to clarify things from within. But if we try to suspend our personal beliefs and attempt to decipher the immense variety of opinions on the idea of Deity throughout the ages, this is the *phenomenological method*. The given is then the sediment of the history of human consciousness. Finally, if we reflect on our own personal experience, enriched as much as possible by the thoughts of others, this is the *philosophical or mystical method*.

These methods are not mutually exclusive, and all three play an important role in the human quest for Deity. All three are necessary and mutually imply one another. We only distinguish between them for purely heuristic reasons. Each one presents divisions and subdivisions. Sociology, psychology, and anthropology are among the most important disciplines within these three approaches, each with its own particular methods.

We refer to methods in the plural, because there is not one single theological, phenomenological, or philosophical method. Each of these approaches presents a wide variety of methods. What we describe here is only a general framework of methods, which acquires its own physiognomy only when applied to particular cases.

### *The Theological Method*

The theological method begins with a universally recognized given: there exists a world of the Gods, the world of Deity. We will therefore have to clarify and eventually justify the *raison d'être* of such a world, but we do not necessarily have to prove its existence. In short, the origin of the idea of Deity is Deity itself, whatever this Deity may be. This forms the core of the so-called ontological argument and of any religious initiative that wants to clarify the nature of Deity. Indeed, Deity cannot not be known if it does not exist. The theological problem here consists of determining what kind of existence this is. When Thomas Aquinas, for instance, ends each one of his five "proofs" for the existence of God by saying, "and that is what all call God," he demonstrates his own particular theological method of explaining the existence of some thing that is already called God. The Deity was already there, certainly, as an idea, but also as a reality that hardly anyone doubted, although its non-irrationality had to be demonstrated and its existence verified as real and not merely apparent. Theological proofs therefore presuppose faith and only prove that such faith is not irrational. This is a form of *fides quaerens intellectum*.

We have already observed that the various combinations of methods and horizons yield different configurations of Deity. In fact, theological methods have been mainly combined with the cosmological and the ontological horizons. They have been less involved with the anthropological one, and this explains the uneasiness in theological circles when dealing with the emerging human sciences like psychology and sociology. We need only think, for example, of the difficult dialogue that theology had with Freud, Jung, and Weber. There are serious studies on the psychology and sociology of religion, but little attention has been given to the psychology and sociology of Deity from a theological perspective. Hans Urs von Balthasar's work on the theology of aesthetics is a notable exception.

### *The Phenomenological Method*

The phenomenological method could also be defined as morphological, or even historical, since it is used in the new science of religions often called the history of religions. In general the phenomenological method, taken as the study of Men's beliefs, deduced from their own self-understanding and reflected in the critical consciousness of scholars, is the object of unanimous consensus. It is the place for a typology of the notions of Deity. This method is particularly important today, in a world in which people of different religions mingle in the relations of daily life—that is, in the tensions of technological civilization.

Use of the phenomenological method reveals a huge variety in different kinds of Deity. We find, for example, the so-called animistic conception of Deity as an all-pervading, living force animating everything that exists. We find so-called polytheism, the presence of many Deities as supernatural entities with different powers and functions. We find so-called deism as faith in a supreme Being, often a creator, who later becomes passive toward his creation: a notion that excludes any kind of revealed God. We also find monotheism of the same kind as in the Abrahamic religions, religions of a living, provident, and creator God. We find the various theisms that modify the exclusivity of the monotheistic model and pantheism, the identification of Deity with the universe. We find all sorts of atheisms, as reactions to theism and especially to monotheism. And of course we find a large number of further distinctions and qualifications of these broad notions that are intended to respond to the demands of reason or answer difficulties raised by various individual or collective experiences.

All these types, and the changes that they have undergone over the centuries, have been the subject of many useful and comprehensive studies by well-known scholars like Mircea Eliade, Gerardus Van der Leeuw, Geo Widengren, Kurt Goldammer, William Brede Kristensen, and Friedrich Heiler. With the exception of Widengren, none of these authors uses the notion of *God* as a major religious category. Even Widengren, who emphatically wants to distinguish religion from magic, while affirming that faith in God constitutes "the profound essence of religion," has a rather elastic idea of what God means. All the others recognize that there is a particular sphere at the center of religious life.

### *The Mystical-Philosophical Method*

The mystical-philosophical method proceeds differently, although, in its modalities, not totally separately from those of the previous methods. Pascal's famous note, found stitched in his coat after his death, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and the scholars," has since served in the West to emphasize this difference. Without entering into the discussion of whether the "living God" is the *actus purus* or whether one can fall in love with the prime mover, the quintessence of the mystical-

philosophical method consists in the propensity to question everything. The philosophical method is that of the radical question, be it the question of salvation, *mokṣa*, happiness, or anything else that may be conceived. It is within this framework that the question of Deity appears. Here, in a cloud made of knowledge and of unknowing, in a science of good and evil, lies the mystical-philosophical locus of Deity. This locus is the ultimate question, even if in the end it has no answer.

If this ultimate locus is considered to exist, then the question of Deity turns into what Heidegger calls an "ontotheology," a reflection on the Being of Beings. At this point the philosophical method encounters historical controversy. Is Deity the highest Being, or is it Being as such? In the latter case it cannot be a supreme Being. The ontological difference does not coincide with the theological one. The history of religions puts the same question by asking how the supreme Being is related to the whole of reality. This polarity between Being and supreme Being permeates most of the conceptions of Deity. We could phrase it as the polarity between the Deity of the intellectual Beings and the Deity of the people (supreme Being). A more academic way of saying it is this: Deity is the result of a reflection of thought (that discovers Being) or of an existential attitude (requiring a supreme Being). In the first case Deity is the provident Being, the source of Being, the foundation, the Being that "is" in all Beings. But in the second case Deity is the supreme Being, the Lord, the divine person, the ultimate in the pyramid of Reality. The first conception will have to clarify the relation between Deity as foundation of Being and an indeterminate and generic *ens commune*. The second will have to define the relation between Deity as *esse subsistens* and all the other Beings that Deity creates, governs, and directs.

Is Deity Being (*Sein*, *sat*, *esse*) or the supreme Being (*höchstes Seiendes*, *paramātmān*, *ens realissimum*)? One can think about the first, but one cannot worship it. One can love the second and trust in it, but this God cannot be reasoned about; it is corroded by thinking.

If the philosophical locus of the Deity is the ultimate question, we may find as many conceptions of Deity as there are ultimate questions. Hence the many and varied answers. The variety of religions can also be explained from this perspective: religions give different answers to ultimate questions and the questions themselves are different. But philosophical reflection can formulate further questions: What is it that prompts Man to ask the ultimate question, whatever this question may be? Why is Man a questioning Being, always thirsty for questions?

In short, the problem of Deity has to do with the peculiarity of Man as a questioning animal. "God acts without a why and knows no why," says Meister Eckhart. What prompts Man to ask questions is ultimately the consciousness of not being fulfilled, of not knowing, of being incomplete. This consciousness can be expressed in the anthropological discovery of human imperfection, which is also manifested in action, or in the cosmological observation that the universe is in movement and still becoming, or in the ontological thought of nothingness that seems to haunt Being. In the final analysis, the problem of becoming emerges here as the theological problem par excellence. If becoming is possible, it is only because Being is still "in Being." What bridges this gap between Being and becoming (whether by encompassing them in itself or not) is the locus of the Deity: it keeps open the flow of Being.

There would be a further approach to the question, which we mentioned while dealing with the mystical-philosophical method—although mysticism is not strictly a method in the current sense. By "mysticism," in fact, we mean an experience of Reality but one that, as soon as it is expressed, falls into one of the above-described methods and ceases to be mystical.

## THE STRUCTURE OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS OF DEITY

The different perspectives that we have found so far in the human approach to Deity are resolved in a healthy pluralism: reality is itself pluralistic. We cannot, of course, encompass this plurality in a unified framework of intelligibility on a universal scale. Yet if we keep in mind our particular location in time and space and also the various viewpoints and prejudices, we may still venture some further considerations.

Our starting point is the lost innocence of our present condition. Whatever Deity may be—whatever peoples of other ages have felt, thought, or believed about Deity, even if they have told us that it was Deity itself that spoke to them—contemporary Man still retains the conviction that any relation with Deity takes place in and through consciousness. This in no way diminishes the reality of Deity. It just affirms that human consciousness is always with us on this path. If we want to reconcile the different opinions on the nature of Deity, we shall have to call upon the structure of our consciousness, accepting not only that Deity may be much more than an act or a content of consciousness but also that this consciousness may vary in time and space.

In view of the many opinions about Deity we have to rely on the one factor that is common to them all, namely human consciousness, which uses the word *Deity* or its homeomorphic equivalents. Deity has this one constitutive feature: it is revealed to us in an act of consciousness, an act of consciousness that, despite its transcendent nature, has no verifiable referent outside consciousness itself. This referent, in fact, is neither visible nor intelligible, and yet every culture in the world witnesses to the fact that Men constantly speak about a "something" that transcends all other parameters. We have then to rely on the cultural documents of the past and the present that witness to this *tertium* we call *Deity*.

We rely on the fact that people have actually meant something when using this word or its equivalents. The analysis of Deity is therefore based not on the empirical presence of the object or on the immediate evidence of thought, but on tradition in its precise etymological meaning, that is, on a cultural content transmitted to us. One exception would seem to be the case of the mystics, who claim to have directly experienced this extra-empirical and supra-intellectual reality. Yet as soon as the mystics speak they too have to fall back on their consciousness. Thought and discourse on the divine belong to a particular field of human consciousness whose contents are revealed in direct experience and nowhere else. This highlights the elusive character of the divine and also explains why the question is more important than the answer.

Deity is visible only in its manifestations: there is no way to make visible the power that is manifested beyond what is actually manifested. Nicholas of Cusa says explicitly that God is the invisibility of the visible world, just as the world is the manifestation of the invisible God.



Deity is not intelligible. It would cease to be divine if we could grasp its meaning like that of something belonging to the human or worldly sphere. The divine is not an object of observation, nor can there be a science of the divine. Thus Meister Eckhart says that we must transcend not only the fruits of imagination but also those of understanding.

Long before Śaṅkara, the Indic world placed critical importance on the distinction between appearance and reality and recognized that the latter transcends both the senses and the mind. The short *Kena-upaniṣad* is perhaps one of the best sacred texts to underline the transcendence and immanence of Deity:

That which cannot be expressed by words  
but by which the word is expressed . . .  
That which cannot be thought by the mind,  
but by which, they say, the mind is thought . . .  
That which cannot be seen by the eye,  
but from which the eyes receive sight . . .  
It is not known by those who (believe they) know it;  
it is known by those who do not (know they) know it.  
I.5ff.; II.3

In conclusion, of the divine we perceive only the *logos* (the "word"), the *theologia*. But it is a *logos* irreducible to *nous*; that is, it is a word revealed only in the experience itself. But this does not mean we can conclude that the divine is just a subjective state of experience. Everything, indeed, is related to a state of experience, but with all other things we have a communicable referent; we can get to the *res nominis*, that is, the thing named. This is not the case with the divine, because its *res nominis* is in its *ratio nominis*, that is, in the meaning of the name itself. And this is what makes theological and religious disputes so uncompromisingly serious. The names of God are all we have. Considering names as mere labels for things (as in nominalism) is the typical procedure of modern science, but this method is not adequate in the case of Deity. Without the names, in fact, we have no way to find the referent.

The names of Deity are not the same as abstract names like *justice* and *beauty*. We may infer the meaning of justice by observing a certain pattern of behavior among people and acquire some sense of beauty by comparing our experiences with similar ones of other people—or with an *a priori* definition. But human behavior and sensible objects fall into the category of experiences shared by all. In other words, the referent in all these cases is verifiable outside of consciousness although not independently of it. This is not the case with Deity. We cannot verify it as an object situated outside the field of our consciousness, nor can we compare our states of consciousness as we can in the case of other abstract concepts. In this latter case we can point to the things or the acts that reflect, reveal, or somehow define the meaning we give to such words. In the case of Deity we can certainly infer the idea people have of it from what they say and do, but there is a difference: a dimension of transcendence, of ineffability, inadequacy, essentialness, or uniqueness, which necessarily leaves a gap between what is manifested and its source. This is the reason why some traditions have postulated a special "seventh" sense related to the divine, which is neither reducible to the five senses nor to the "sixth" sense of the intellect.

Now, to state that all the names of Deity mean ultimately the same thing presupposes that "our" name is the real one. We make of our conception of it, expressed in the name we give it, the model for all other conceptions. The name we give it would then name the "thing" that we suppose can have other names as well. But this is not how things are in reality.

Not everybody is looking for the same thing, either the ultimate cause, the foundation of Being, or absolute nothingness. Not many followers of Kālī would be willing to abandon their practice and worship Allāh, or true Christians ready to deny Christ and adore Caesar. Deity is not a Kantian "thing-in-itself," and the words do matter. The conception we have of Deity is certainly not identical with its reality, but it is our way of coming close to it, and to deny it would be to betray ourselves. Martyrdom for the love of a name is a human event that cannot be reduced to pure fanaticism.

The name we give it, or the name anyone else gives it, does not exhaust the nature of Deity. Strictly speaking we do not name it. We only refer to him, her, or it. Or we simply believe, call, pray, shout, dance, or whatever. Deity is not an object of naming but of invocation. Deity is what we appeal to, implore, and worship precisely because it is beyond our apprehending faculties.

In the Greek tradition, *theos* is a predicative noun: some things and certain particular entities are divine. *Theos* is therefore an attribute. God is not a concept but a name. But when the name loses its power, no amount of conceptualization can give it back.

There has been a great revolution in the conception of Deity: a movement from the predicate to the subject. In the West this could be said to be the spirit of the Abrahamic tradition. While many traditions say that light, love, or goodness is God—that is, the divine ("the Truth is God," said Gandhi)—the New Testament reverses the phrase and states that God is light, love, and goodness. Something similar could be said of the great revolution of the *Upaniṣads*, where we observe the passage from the God of the third person (the Vedic Gods) to the God of the first person (*aham brahman*, "I am brahman") via the second person (*tat tvam asi*, "thou art that"). The revelation of the "I" springs from the authentic realization of those who aspire to freedom; the "I" is not a third person (he, she, it, or even they). The language of Deity cannot be the third person; the Deity has to be the first person. It is only the real "I" when it says "I" or rather when "I" says "I"; or even more precisely when I say "I." This is true realization—the realization of the "I" (by the I). Only the "I" can say "I."

In any case the divine is so linked to our state of consciousness that there is no way of establishing what ontic status it has (outside the ontological affirmation itself). Or, rather, Deity has no ontic status. Any ontological statement has a recognized value only among people who share the same myth, one in which that particular form of the divine is accepted as true.

The claim to universality is the temptation of any complex and sophisticated culture. This aspiration to universality is built into human nature. But we often fail to recognize that we cannot make a claim for universality in our own terms, which of course are far from being universal.

Discourse on the divine is thus limited to people who share the same mythical horizon. Anyone else may listen but will not truly understand. Each culture has a myth in which their particular form of the divine is plausible and can be presented as a possible object of discourse. In this sense it cannot be generalized: it is limited to those of the same faith, to the initiated. In fact, when we refer to the divine we do not actually know what we are talking about. We are already taking it for granted, which is the function of myth—that is, to offer an unquestioned horizon of intelligibility where our words can have meaning.

And yet the world of Deity is a world that constantly recurs in the history of humanity. To what are all these traditions referring? If asked, believers would answer that the divine is not a purely subjective state of consciousness; many would say they are referring to the highest level of reality, a level so high that it is beyond the reach of human faculties. And yet they continue to speak of it because it is part of their myth, and the myth is the locus of faith. It is only when pressed by someone outside their group that they will concede that there is

no chance of pointing to any referent in the world of common human experience. At most they may point to an analogous experience if they have found a language to communicate it.

What, then, is the content of such an experience of Deity? We have said that the content of the experience is inseparable from the experience itself, so that it cannot be "shown" outside the experience: the divine is neither sensible nor intelligible. But that is not all. Common sense and historical evidence say that of course there is something else, since everyone speaks about the divine in one form or another. Now we may say that it makes no sense to speak about something that we cannot think. That is why many philosophers feel more comfortable defining the content of such an experience as nothingness. All theology ends up being apophatic.

From these considerations we may conclude that something in human consciousness points to something beyond consciousness itself, and yet we are unable to "locate" it outside that consciousness. God has been described as a "transcendent center of intention" (John E. Smith). No wonder, then, that many thinkers in both East and West identify Deity with consciousness in its highest form. Others maintain a sort of transcendental movement of human consciousness toward a superior and perfect form of consciousness, which they then call divine. Others again affirm that it is only a pathological development of our individual consciousness, triggered perhaps by fear of the unknown. Finally, while recognizing both the divine immanence of human consciousness and human intentionality toward a transcendent divine consciousness, some cannot quite consider Deity as an all-encompassing reality but only as a dimension of it. Reality is prior to consciousness. Consciousness is always consciousness *of*—of reality, of Being, even of itself. This latter is the *noësis noēseōs* of Aristotle, the absolute reflection of Hegel, and the *svayamprakāśa* (self-illumination) of the vedānta. But pure consciousness cannot be consciousness of anything, not even of itself. This is why the vedānta says that *brahman* is not even conscious of being *brahman*. It is Īśvara, the Lord, who is the full consciousness of *brahman*. Something similar could be said of the Father, the *plenitudo fontalis* of the Christian Trinity.

## DEITY BETWEEN GOD AND THE SACRED

Having tried to present the problem of Deity in its broadest aspect, we may wonder whether it is preferable to speak of the "divine" rather than of "Deity." "Divine" might better describe what we are looking for, namely a supercategory or a megacategory that can express the religious phenomenon in its universality. The word *Deity*, because its grammatical form is substantive, suggests a certain degree of substantialization, which for many religious traditions is unsuitable: consider the *nāstika* or *anātmavādin* of Buddhism, which say there is no God because there is no substance. Thus, despite the many modern efforts at adaptation, the Buddhist world is not comfortable with the word *Deity*—although, of course, it has no difficulty with divinities.

But there is another equally general category that has often been presented as the center of the religious traditions of humanity. Every religion, we are told, deals with the sacred. It was Nathan Söderblom who, in 1913, defined the notion of *sacred* as even more essential than the notion of *God*. For Söderblom no real religion, of those historically present, is without a distinction between sacred and profane. Mircea Eliade is today the most important spokesman for the centrality of the sacred as the religious phenomenon par excellence. But, we must ask, if the sacred is the central category of religion, what are the place and role of Deity?

There is great danger in reducing the immense jungle of Man's religious experience, as crystallized in the different religions of the world, to a single category or even to a single set of categories. Even if this were possible, its only purpose would be to give a panoramic and coherent picture of the whole. But what cannot be universalized is precisely the perspective of the observer. Let us assume for a moment that the sacred is a convincing category for interpreting and describing religious phenomena. It would still be a suitable category only for us—that is, for a very particular category of readers at one point in time and space. If the parameters of interpretation change, then so must the perspective. In short, we cannot universalize our perspective, and "global perspective" is obviously a contradiction in terms. But there is room for plenty more attempts to capture the religious experience of humanity. Let us try then to identify the locus of Deity in the panorama of religious experience and distinguish it from the sacred.

One element seems to characterize all the different meanings of *Deity*: personality. Deity does not need to be a substance or a person in the modern sense of the word. But on the other hand, *Deity* does not simply denote a characteristic attributed to things, as does the term *sacred*. Deity is a source of action, an active element, a spontaneous factor: it is free. Its actions cannot be anticipated: it has initiative. We cannot speak of Deity as we would of an object that we can hold down in the web of our thoughts. Deity has the mysterious ability to act and not just react, to take the lead, albeit in a purely passive way.

We should, however, draw a distinction between personality and person on the one hand and person and substance on the other. We need to remember that the concept of person was developed in the West not as a meditation on Man but as a theological problem. To speak of the personality of Deity is no more an anthropomorphism than speaking of God as a supreme Being, which some would call an anthropomorphism simply because Man is also a Being. Here the polemical aspect of the notion of Deity comes to the fore. Almost everyone will admit that there is a third dimension in reality, since Man and the world, as they are experienced by us, do not exhaust that other pole that is neither Man nor the world as we experience them. But not everyone is ready to admit that this third pole has personality—that is, that it is endowed with freedom, is a source of action, has an identity, and is relation.

In this sense the concept of Deity is not just the idea that there exists a third pole in reality. Nor does it coincide with the concept of God. Rather, it stands halfway between the sacred and God. It shares with the former its immanence and with the latter its personality. But while the concept of God seems to imply a certain substance, the idea of Deity does not need to present this characteristic. It only indicates that this third dimension is not a purely mental hypothesis that serves to make sense of reality or simply to provide something that fills in the gaps in our understanding. The notion of Deity suggests that this other dimension is real—that is, active, free, efficacious, and powerful in itself—but it does not make it independent of the two other poles and thus not even independent of our conceptions. In short, Deity represents the highest form of existence.

## CONCLUSIONS

This multicultural approach to the mystery of *Deity* has one liberating consequence: It liberates us from the many apories that, over the centuries, have tormented the human mind in its attempt to consider God as the supreme Being. Among these are the questions: Is it personal or impersonal? If it is omnipotent, how can it allow evil? If infinite, what is the place of finite Beings? If omniscient, what then of human freedom? Many subtle theological and philosophical answers have been put forward to these questions. But the answers could be made simpler by cutting the Gordian knot of a universal theory about God and rediscovering the divine as a true dimension of reality.

If the word *Deity* means a plurality of divine Beings, absolute consciousness, perfect happiness, the supreme Being, a divine character of Beings or of Being as such, then thought about *Deity* has no referent. At the same time it seems to be one of the most constant and powerful factors in human existence throughout the ages and across different cultures. The names for *Deity* or its homeomorphic equivalents are unique. Philosophy holds that the intentionality of human consciousness, while pointing outside itself, cannot show, in the realm of the sensible or the intelligible, the referent of this intentional act. In short, there is no object that is *Deity*. Either human consciousness transcends itself, or thought about *Deity* is an illusion, albeit a transcendental illusion of historical reality.

We should return now to one of our earlier queries. Is the word *Deity* broad enough to include all the types of the mystery we have tried to describe? We know that its original context is the cosmological, but we have also noted that we distinguish it from the name *God* precisely to allow it other horizons.

The word *Deity* may partially fulfill this role on one essential condition: that it strip itself of all meanings that derive from a single group of civilizations. This amounts to saying that it cannot have any specific content, because any attribute—Being, Non-Being, goodness, creation, fatherhood, or any other—is meaningful only in the context of a given cultural universe (or a group of them). *Deity* then becomes an empty symbol to which different cultures attribute different concrete qualifications, positive or negative. *Deity*, then, means something only when it is translated into a particular language.

I am still rather critical of such an option, however, and would like to propose a compromise that in reality may appear obvious. If this article were to be translated into Chinese, Arabic, or Swahili, what word would we use to convey this idea of *Deity*? We would either coin a new name or use an old one with the connotations it has in the language in question. So we can say that in our language *Deity* may be a suitable name to transcend the provincial limits of certain groups of cultures—such as the one that does not regard Buddhism as a religion and Confucianism only as a philosophy because they do not accept the Abrahamic idea of God. But we should avoid elevating the word *Deity* as the name for that metacategory. It is

only a pointer toward the ultimate horizon of human consciousness and the utmost limit of human powers of thought, imagination, and Being. Now, abstract terms like the *ultimacy* or metaphors like *horizon* are equally dependent on particular cultural systems or ways of thinking. Perhaps the word *mystery* is more appropriate, in spite of its Hellenic flavor. Or should we say *brahman, kami, numen* . . . ?

At any rate we should insist that this does not mean all these questions are searching for the same thing but in different places. The quest is different in each case, and so are the modalities or methods involved. Let us leave open the question (in the end a false question) of whether we use different methods because we are looking for different things or whether we find different answers because we use different methods. Both possibilities are deeply correlated, and their correlation, as we have seen, is not found at the level of the *logos* but of the *mythos*. All our ways and means, all our investigations and perspectives belong not just to the search but also to what is sought. Deity is not independent of our own search for it. If we radically destroy all the ways to the peak, the entire mountain will collapse. The slopes of the mountain also make up the mountain.

Scholars may debate whether humanity is or is not monotheistic, whether a personal God is a universal truth or there actually is a creator, whether the atheists are right in denouncing all kinds of anthropomorphism and dogmatism, whether there is a divine origin of this universe or if there awaits a glorious or catastrophic *parousia*. One thing seems to emerge as a cultural universal and a historical invariant: besides the World and Man there is a third pole, a hidden dimension, another element that has received and is still receiving the most varied names, each of which speaks of its power and of the inability of Men to reduce everything to a common denominator.

So the human being, both individually and as a species, is not alone. Man is not alone not just because he has an Earth under his feet but also because he has a Heaven above his head. But there is still something else, something more than what meets the eye or comes into the range of the mind. There is something more, something Men cannot adequately define but that torments them nonetheless. This something is freedom and infiniteness. Deity stands for all that is not finished (in-finite) and thus allows for continuous transformation. Man needs an opening, a way out of the strictures of the exclusively empirical or ideological affairs of daily life. The idea of Deity can offer such an opening, provided it can be kept free of any particular content. Thus it could become a symbol for the emerging myth of a human race that can no longer afford to transform cultural differences into a cosmic tragedy.

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## Part Two

### THE FACES OF GOD—*FACIES DEITATIS*\*

Ait Jesus: cognosce id quod est coram facie tua,  
et id quod absconditum est tibi revelabitur tibi.

*Jesus said: Recognize what is in your sight,  
and that which is hidden from you will become plain to you.*

*Coptic Gospel according to Thomas, chap. 5*

The face of God, like the gaze of the icon described by Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century at the beginning of his short treatise *De visione Dei*, sees from all sides, extends everywhere, and is present on every face, yet is not completely revealed in any of them. God has no face because all faces are his. They are all his because he does not own one exclusively. Vedic philosophy says that *brahman* is hidden in his own bosom, so hidden that it is only through our attributes that he becomes manifest. Isaiah says that God is a "hidden" God, echoing the age-old wisdom that says the divine loves darkness. But speaking of God we cannot expect our language to be univocal.

God certainly has a face: it shows itself on our faces and shines with Taboric light whenever we do not try to substitute it with our own physiognomy. When our *ego* disappears, the face of God appears, revealing our own true face as his disappears. The divine gaze is creator and creates on our face that divine gaze which is also ours.

This is an *oxymoron*, but not a paradox. A paradox occurs when we make an effort to elevate the principle of noncontradiction to something more than a postulate of the human "word" and we transform it into principle of Being, thus falling into the heresy of logomonism

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\* *Facies Deitatis: Los rostros de Dios*, originally written in Spanish for an exhibition of religious paintings at the monastery of San Martín Pinario, Santiago de Compostella (September–November 2000). Translated by Clarissa Balazseskul-Hawes.

and the reduction of the Word (*logos*) to *ratio* and, even worse, to concept. The Word is never alone; it is never "in itself." The Word is always an *aliquid ab alio, in alio, and ad alium*; it is something that comes from Someone and says Something to Someone. The Christian tradition calls the Someone who has pronounced the *logos* "Generator" (Father); the Something, "Creation"; and the other (Someone), "Spirit."

Many Tibetan *mandala*, after long and patient hours of planning and construction, and after having been used for special worship, are destroyed to prevent them becoming objectivized and losing their energy and their reality. The face cannot be objectivized; it is always someone's face for someone. The face is not a thing. Each face reveals and conceals. "No one has ever seen God, and this is as sure as the fact that all have seen God—when they learned to love," says St. John himself.

What happens is that many of those who love do not know they are seeing the face of God, like the benefactors and wrongdoers of the last judgment described by St. Matthew, who do not know that in the good works they carry out or neglect to carry out, the "son of Man" is present.

The faces of God are the faces of Man. Artists have this intuition when they see something more in Man than what absent-minded visitors to a museum would see; they discover the reflection of the divine in human beings, and if they are pure enough, they see this reflection in everything they paint, sculpt, build, sing, and in the final instance, live. I am not just talking about professional artists. Every Man is an artist, and the work of art that has been entrusted to all of us is our life itself: to make an icon of our very existence. Those who are called artists as such try to shape the faces of God into everything they do (*poiesis*) and not only into what they make or put into practice (*praxis*).

The faces of God are those of Men, as we have said, but the face of Man is unfinished and often masked. Often Man not only identifies with his individual "persona" but covers it with a mask artificially shaped from his vanity or, even more, his egoism. Thus, the person is just what the word means: a mask, a mask that veils us just as when Adam and Eve lost their primitive innocence and wanted to cover themselves because they were ashamed of their nakedness. The naked face of Man is a divine face; it is one of God's faces. This has been understood by many cultures that represent God with many faces—and naturally many arms and legs, as every face requires a corresponding body. One could say that the representation of a Body with many faces and many limbs is one of the least imperfect symbols of monotheism.

What we have said up to this point is only a half-truth, or rather it is not truth because truth will not be divided, just as a divided heart is not a pure heart. As many traditions repeat, from the tantric to the sacramental Christian tradition, there are not two loves, one divine and another human. Human love is the human way in which Man loves, just as divine love is God's divine way of loving. But what unites Man with God is love, as virtually all traditions have said. It is a love that unites but does not confuse: there must be two parts that overcome their duality without falling into unity. This is *advaita*. There are not two loves: one does not exist without the other. A God who did not love Man would not be God, just as a Man who did not love God would not be human. When we truly love we become divine, although when the object of our love is not transparent we can fall into idolatry. The sin lies in the division of this one love into two parts, and this makes our love of God become the projection of an unfulfilled desire and our merely human love a dissatisfied introversion, searching for the infinite in the finite by drifting from one object to another. The above statement is completed by mysticism when it states that human love is (also) the divine form of Man's loving and that divine love is the human form of God's loving. Dante sums this up

by saying, "Amor ch'a nullo amato amar perdona" (Love that pardons no one loved from loving). Love requires "presence and body," as St. John of the Cross said later. We are saying that without love neither the face of God nor the face of Man can exist. The face is not an objective physiognomy.

A face that does not speak, attract, threaten, or reject is not a face. The devil also has a face and therefore is not purely objective. Reality transcends our epistemological categories. We must find the fullness of which the *Upaniṣads* speak and that Christ told us he had come to bring to the world. It is up to us to reconstruct the divine body of Prajāpati, as the Vedic tradition would tell us, while Peter, Paul, and their Christian tradition would say it is up to Men to complete the mystical body of Christ, not to mention Taoist or Confucian wisdom expressed in other languages that we do not have time to translate here.

The other aspect of the unique truth is that the faces of Man are faces of God. We have already touched on this. If we turn the phrase round and substitute the subject with the predicate, it still continues to be true. Perhaps this is why we should purify our vision and regard this exhibition of "the face of God" with a pure eye: the Vittorini monks of twelfth-century Europe would call it the third eye, as would many other traditions both of West and East. We are talking about the eye that sees the face of God in Man. The eye with which we see God is the eye with which God sees us, wrote Meister Eckhart. Man is an icon of Divinity because Divinity is also an icon of Man. Therefore we need the "Taboric light" to take us a step further than that taken by the great fourteenth-century Christian theologian, Gregory Palamas.

Commenting on the transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, during which the apostles glimpsed the divine face (*prosōpon*) of the Man Jesus, the same *hesychast* theologian describes the Taboric light as allowing us to see God in the face of a man. The second step we have mentioned is what allows us to see Man in the depths of the Divinity.

A certain Western "panic terror" of pantheism has caused it to go to the opposite extreme of an insurmountable dualism, making God superfluous or at best transforming him into a metaphor for so-called believers, as if others were not believers, albeit in a different manner. These are two falsehoods if we are unable to "experientiate" them together: God has a human face and Man has a divine face.

Once again we must say that to discover the human face of God our heart must be as pure as the heart we need to discern the divine face in Man. The undivided love we spoke of above is necessary. One of the beatitudes, with echoes in the majority of human traditions, says that the pure in heart shall see God. The Buddha would say that a pure heart is empty, free of ambition and of desire, and discovers the infinite in this emptiness. It is also a heart free of concepts and even ideas. God is neither a concept nor an idea. Idolatry is the greatest sin, not only in Israel but also in the five continents. An icon is not an idol. An icon, like *brahman*, only reveals a quarter of its reality to the eyes of both the body and the mind. Thus we need aniconic traditions to remind us of this. They do not tell us that there is no possible "representation" of God but that only a "part" of God can be "represented."

The apt expression "the faces of God" means much more than God simply having a face or that he manifests himself in human faces when we learn to discover them by loving them. It also means that we can know the face of God, as we have just said, only by loving him. But that is not all.

God has the faces of his creatures and we can "see him" in them. Yet we also have a face. Our face is our symbol, and we are known and loved through our face. Nevertheless my human face does not respond or react in the same way toward all the divine faces of creatures. There are faces that speak to us, that make us fall in love and attract us. And these faces have

names and proper names; they are not generic surnames but personal names with their own face and intimate relations.

In Hindū spirituality we find a concept that may help us explain what we are trying to say: *iṣṭadevatā*, that face of Divinity that has shown and revealed itself and, if we have gained a certain maturity, has also spoken to us and we have been able to establish a personal relationship with it; this does not mean divine "personamorphism" but human personalism.

*Iṣṭadevatā* is not the image of the Divinity or the divine name of a whim of mine or my individualistic choice. It is the name I have received (from tradition, from grace, from the *guru*, from "providence") and that I have recognized as his proper name for me and have freely accepted. That name then becomes the personal symbol of the divine. I feel chosen by him (by her, the *iṣṭadevatā*) far more than as a result of my individual decision. The Divinity has the initiative; our attitude toward it is more feminine. We feel chosen, attracted, loved, known, and called upon. *Iṣṭadevatā* is a living symbol. Durga, Kṛṣṇa, or Christ could serve as examples, but also the Beloved and indeed Beauty and Truth. One could, and one should, then examine if those symbols are adequate to sustain all the weight and the richness of our relationship with this Mystery, this third dimension of reality of which one name is God. In any case it is the divine face that, more or less discreetly, has appeared to us and in which Man's aspiration toward something that, although it is concrete, cannot forgo its universality, is incarnated.

This leads us to the ambivalence of the "faces of God." Modern Man is so accustomed to formal generalizations that he hardly notices that, if he could not see the "names of God" in the form we have explained, we would be the victims of vulgar polytheism. I will use a personal confession to avoid being unnecessarily long-winded. For me God has a face, Christ, but I also find everyone else in this face; I find them but I am mindful not to confuse them or to claim that the others should also see the face that I see or that all the faces are the same. The universal can only be rooted in the concrete. The concrete can be a symbol but not the universal. The concrete constitutes subjectivity while the universal demands objectivity. A "concept" may be universal even if only in the cultural context in which it has been conceived; a symbol is such only for he who discovers it as a symbol. A face is not a face for those who do not look on it or for whom the face does not reveal itself as such. We could even claim that without love there is no face.

There is no doubt that each face of God is a theophany, but not all theophanies are a manifestation or a revelation—in other words, a "phany" of God. And this is not because God can be divided and is made up of more or less "substantial" "parts" but because we are limited. The whole Islamic-Christian debate on monotheism and the Trinity would come to light (I do not dare to call it *nūr Muḥammadi*, Muslim light) if the *homoousios* or consubstantiality of the Council of Nicea were understood as a real relation of equality without substantialist reification—an idea that could be justified in the light of the genesis of such a formulation. The light that allows us to see each face of God is reflected in our gaze, so that we only see that part, that aspect of the Divinity, for which we are ready. According to one of the Prophet's *ḥadīṭs*, each *imam* can say that he is the face of God, of the revealed God. To see the face of God we need to be transparent to the light. It follows that this exhibition is more than a museum: it is a message and a calling. On the façade of Plato's Academy it said, "He who does not know geometry may not enter." He who is not willing to see "the faces of God" may not enter. This is the invitation: a foray into "speculative theology"—the theology whose task is to be a mirror (*speculum*) in which God is reflected. As we have already mentioned, the mirror must be limpid (clean) and if possible neither concave nor convex.

This could be a suggestion for the visitors to the exhibition. The traditional *disciplina arcani*, despite its misuse, was not an elitist whim of some who aspired to power, notwithstanding that, as the Latins were well aware, *corruptio optimi pessima*. It was respect for the hierarchy of creation and a warning that it is dangerous to play with fire. The twelfth-century Cordovan genius Mosheh ben Maimon, in the introduction to the third part of his *Guide for the Perplexed*, states that (as also claimed for the *Vedas*, the Bible, and other sacred books) the secrets of the Torah cannot be disclosed to those who are not prepared—to those who have not opened themselves to the "light of the face" (*ohr panar*), as Maimonides says himself in his work *Regimen of Health*. Everyone can read sacred books now, but can everyone understand them?

Before entering the sacred precinct of a temple one must purify oneself—touching the architrave of the door, sanctifying oneself with the holy water, permeating oneself with the scent of the *gopuram* (the large towers at Hindū temples), washing one's face, or removing one's shoes. Before approaching an exhibition of the "faces of God" we should purify our faces so that we will not look without seeing or hear without listening, and the "faces of God" will not appear to us as artificial objects shaped by some expert with more or less suitable materials.

Sages of both East and West tell us that the "representation of the sacred" only "presents" itself to those who are present to themselves. When our gaze is pure we can see the aniconic in the iconic, and that is when the iconic appears to us as a face.

The face, which we see with our eyes, understand with our mind, and intuit with the spirit, is not just body nor is it completely visible. A face speaks and reveals. The *oxymoron* is true: a face speaks the ineffable and reveals the invisible. It reveals that the word does not say all and that the aspect and substance of what it un-veils is always enveloped by the "velamen" of truth, of goodness, and also of Being, as our previously mentioned Western mystic of the thirteenth century wrote, daring to preach his innermost intuitions in "vulgar" language in the monasteries of cloistered nuns. Even today many Eastern women tell us that by covering their faces they are not objects of exploitation, desire, or veneration, but subjects who do not wish to submit to the whims of those who are physically stronger than they are. I have seen women bare their breasts without shame to feed their children, while not showing their faces.

Until we discover the face of God in our own face we do not know ourselves and have not reached that "know thyself," which for almost thirty centuries has been perhaps the most universal maxim of human wisdom. He who knows himself knows God, says Plato, explaining the invitation on the façade at Delphi, magnificently annotated by Ibn al-'Arabū commenting on a *ḥadīṭ* of the Islamic tradition (*gnōthi sauton, man 'arafa nafsā-hu 'arafa rabba-hu, koiji-kiūmei*, for those who understand it). Yet this is not all, or rather it is all but in a more implicit form. "He who knows himself knows all creatures," wrote Meister Eckhart at the beginning of his little jewel *On the Noble Man*, reechoing an ancient tradition later formulated philosophically by Ibn Sūnā (Avicenna) and other Jewish and Christian thinkers after that. An authentic face reflects, and perhaps often refracts, the whole of reality.

This exhibition could also serve to dampen that sort of superiority complex that afflicts "men of letters," as St. Teresa of Avila would have said. When the mind wants to continue to go beyond form, it often stops on this side of reality.

There are self-proclaimed philosophers who boast that with their "ideas" on Deity they can overcome any anthropomorphism, as if God were closer to their idea (of God) than to his image on the icon. It has been said that the mystery of God is closer to humble illiterates than to those rich in spirit, and that prostitutes could go before us into the kingdom of heaven. An art exhibition should be a meeting point between the iconic and the aniconic, between spirit and matter, the sacred and the profane, and ultimately

between heaven and earth. The prayer "on earth as it is in heaven" is recited by many, but I fear that some do not grasp the cosmic profundity of what they are saying. I would not be misunderstood, however: the encounter between these two poles of reality, the material and the spiritual, the human and the divine, is not a monist confusion; it is an encounter at a tangential point. It is the tangent of our contingency, which allows us to touch (*cum tangere*) the divine at a unique point without dimensions—even if we "touch" the whole of Deity because God has no dimensions.

It might be argued that a face has some dimensions but it is easy to reply that a living face has infinite dimensions. I hope that this exhibition on the "faces of God" will contribute to creatively recovering the spirituality of the icon that has been the ideal of contemplative life over the centuries, as expressed by Gregory of Nyssa in his *De hominis officio* in the fourth century: to rebuild in ourselves the original beauty of the model of wanting to live in goodness and truth with the senses alert, the intelligence attentive, and the will ready. The icon can inspire fear, but it also attracts and is serious, yet joyful. One of the most ancient Castilian documents (although probably derived from St. Augustine), preserved in an anonymous text of the tenth century in the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, says *Fíconus Deus omnipotes tal serbitio fare ke devante ela sua face gaudioso segamus. Amen* (May omnipotent God give us such grace that in the presence of his face we are [remain] joyful. Amen).

Up to this point we have interpreted *facies Deitatis* in its subjective genitive sense: the face of the Deity, the face of God, and we have said that God does indeed have a face and his face is human. We have suggested that the conception of an absolutely transcendent divinity is not only impossible for us but also contradictory, since if we somehow had a notion of God, this very notion would destroy its transcendence, albeit only intentionally. Pure transcendence is not thinkable, and we refrain from stating whether it is possible or not. We can only think about the transcendence of God and humanly wonder if it is "absolute"—that is, if it is in relation to its own immanence. It is in the immanence of Deity that we find something transcendent. That is why we can speak of God. It is a second-degree ontological question: not on God's existence but on the very meaning of a human discourse on God. And here an iconography of the sacred has a prominent place. God may or may not exist as substance but He exists in human consciousness, and history is the most incontrovertible argument that God, in one form or another, is a real "ingredient" of experience and of human history and therefore of reality. God has a face, an appearance, an aspect, something that can be seen, and in saying this we play with the etymologies of all the words we could list. It is significant that the Vulgate translates Jesus's warning not to judge according to appearances: *secundum faciem, kat'opsis*. There are ancient texts that speak of the face of Isis and generically of the "face of God": *opsis Theou*. The face (*opsis*) is what one sees—the appearance, the apparition, the vision, the sight. We have already said that the relation between iconic and aniconic is a-dual (*advaita*). The inevitable question posed to the human mind—and that, especially in recent centuries, has tortured Man—consists in being able to respond to what lies "behind" this face, hidden by appearance.

This is where the second meaning of the most complex of the grammatical cases comes into play, and it is the objective genitive: "The face of God"—of whom? Who or what is this God who seems to have indisputably shown his face to Men. Who or what does this face belong to? What is behind it?

Such is the deep ambiguity of this grammatical case and its revelatory power that it is not surprising that the word itself (*genitivus*) is related to "generate" (to be of, of the same generator). The subjective and objective genitive, like essence and existence in a certain philosophy on God, coincide; they are the same genitive. The face of God is not merely the

face of an object called God, but it is also the face that He himself is and that we see. The face of God is face, it is His face, God is face. But what does this mean?

We only know human faces and, by analogy, the faces of other living Beings and perhaps the physiognomy of the other creatures that surround us. And this is exactly what we mean: the face of God is the face of Man. Moreover, to interpret the inspiration that I believe generated this text, the faces of God are the faces of Man who, as will have already been noted, we write with a capital letter. Much has been written about the passage in Genesis that says, "God created Man in his own image and likeness" and much speculated on the two words used to differentiate the human being both from other creatures and from the Deity, of which Man would only be an image—resembling the Creator, but not the same as him. However, it is not said that the incorporeal angels are images of God. Being endowed with a body is not an imperfection of Man, as is strongly emphasized by an Indian tradition and echoed by some expressions from the Greek world, not to mention the Christian universe. The humanity of Christ is not a divine imperfection.

The anthropomorphism of the Deity can only be defended in so far as one asserts the theomorphism of Man at the same time. If Man is an image of God, then God is equally a human image (however much the supporters of the *relatio relationis* bend over backward), unless the *sankarists* and Thomists are to deny the reality of the world. Sometimes artists manage to touch reality more deeply than the authors of pure, even Platonic, ideas. The face will not be expressed by a concept. To perceive the face we need symbolic thought, which is something more than conceptual knowledge.

In ancient Greek, as in Homer and in the Hebrew Bible, the word "face" is almost always used in the plural. And our interpretation does not say that the faces of God are the faces of Men but that the faces of God are Man. This is our dignity, and completing the icon of God is our destiny.





**SECTION II**  
**TRINITARIAN VISION**



## Part One

### THE TRINITY—A PRIMORDIAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE\*

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\* This text is the result of the revision of *Trinità ed esperienza religiosa dell'uomo* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1989)—a translation of two works published in different epochs, the first in English: *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, in 1973, and the second in Spanish: *La Trinidad y la experiencia religiosa*, in 1989—confronted with the latest Castilian edition of 1998 revised by the author himself.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND SPANISH EDITION

Although this little book has appeared in English, German, and Italian and will soon appear in French, the first edition in Castilian went virtually unnoticed.

The publisher Siruela had the inspiration to publish this second edition, revised and modified by the author, on a topic that has been a constant meditation of one who has lived the Trinitarian experience for more than half a century.

Tavertet  
Pentecost 1998

## PREFACE

*Sa tredhā ātmānaḥ vyakuruta*  
*He revealed himself to himself in a trinitarian way*

BU I.2.3

Much water has flowed in the Ganges since I wrote this trinitarian meditation, nearly half a century ago. It would be remarkable if I said the water had not eroded the land. In fact, the hut where I wrote the first version was swept away by the water of the sacred river and no longer exists. But it might equally raise suspicion if I said the Ganges itself had disappeared, or that the trinitarian intuition does not remain fundamental both for the life of the peoples and for my own existence. For me the experience has been transformed into what I have called cosmotheandric intuition; it comes into being as the continuation of an idea that some theologians have glimpsed but not brought to fulfillment, perhaps for fear of the ghost of Western theology—pantheism, which is false not for what it claims but for what it denies. Pantheism is an error of defect and not of excess. All is divine, says pantheism; so the panic is understandable. In fact, a monotheistic God who was all would not leave ontological room for creation. The fateful consequences are all too evident: *fuga mundi*, “religion” as a supernatural fact, the placing of the temporal within the sphere of the contemptible, and the constant temptation of theocracy, since without it institutionalized religions lose their relevance—that is, their power. For example, when Christianity is identified with an organization it loses its *raison d’être* in the absence of a Christendom, which is what gives it substance. Hence my “appeal” for Christianness, but that is a different topic altogether. The God-or-World dilemma is a false one because it lies within an abstraction that has lost contact with the real. Neither this “God” nor this “World” is real.

Going back to pantheism we can certainly say that all is divine, but we must immediately add that the divine is not exhausted in any “all.” Pantheism lacks the experience or, to put it better, the intuition of nothingness—non-experience. But this is not the place to deal with that issue. The idea I was referring to, an age-old Christian one and recently reevaluated, is that we generally use the formulation that the “immanent” Trinity that lies in the bosom of Deity is the same as the “economic” Trinity that works *ad extra*, in the outside world.

The cosmotheandric intuition is not content to reveal the Trinitarian “imprint” in “creation” and the “image” in Man, but considers Reality in its totality as the complete Trinity, consisting of divine, human, and cosmic dimensions. The immanent Trinity refers to the Being of God, an ontological conception; the economic Trinity to the action of God, a soteriological conception; and the Trinity we shall speak about to the “whole” of Reality, a radical conception. Reality itself is Trinitarian. The subject of the first two notions is “God”—in general, the God of the Abrahamic tradition. Our topic lies within the Western “faith” tradition, but our subject—“God”—is in a state of crisis within the same Western

world. Whatever we actually make of "God," it is certain that the Trinity of such a "God" has been pushed to the margins not only of daily life in the Westernized world but also of the life of faith of Christians themselves, though the writings of some theologians continue to maintain that the dogma of the Trinity constitutes the substance and the center of doctrine and of Christian life. Something strange, then, is going on either with Christian life or with the "Trinity."

The subject of the radical Trinity, on the other hand, is not this "God" but Reality itself. It does not necessarily presuppose a "God" on which there is something to be said right away, but starts with the whole of Reality, which includes both the subject and the object.

The starting point for what we wish to describe is clearly personal experience, immediately crystallized in a certain formulation. Now both the experience and, even more so, its formulation, cannot be indifferent to the sources that nourish them. These sources are those human traditions that we have come to know. *Knowing* here does not just mean studying and evaluating them, but living and identifying with them. That is not to suggest, in our case, a disregard for Christian tradition, and within it for Scripture, the so-called Magisterium and the interpretations and doctrines formulated over time, but it means trying to accord the same respect to other traditions. Our current state of knowledge finds with ever-increasing clarity that the Trinitarian intuition is a kind of cultural and therefore human "invariant," and this human invariant is the basis of the experience I have referred to.

But now is not the time to enter into a problem I have tried to deal with elsewhere.

The key to understanding this brief trinitarian meditation lies within a Christian perspective, although the Trinity is not a Christian monopoly. This essay aims to examine the Christian mystery and finds deep within it a wonderful convergence with the traditional world of religions and the modern secular world. At this deep level, a fruitful dialogue is possible. We should be very critical of summaries, however well-intentioned they may be, and of any eclectic mixture of spiritualities. We all have little to teach others, but much to learn from them.

The considerations that follow are inevitably written in a condensed form and must make do with a style that is cryptic, though hopefully comprehensible. The essay is without footnotes because, if included, they would be longer than the text itself.

It is said that Darwin, on rereading a short, early piece from his papers as an old man, exclaimed that he would have liked to have written something similar. He had forgotten he himself was its author. I do not believe that is the case here, since I have not forgotten the Trinity and also because I would like to have written much better. If truth be known, the manuscript was snatched from my hands for publication. I hope one day to write the book I promised.

The author is grateful for the support this work has had in the academic world. The idea has also started to seep into religious circles. This is the right place for acknowledgments; to mention names would not be sufficient; to say, in the traditional way, that they are written in the author's heart—or in the book of life, as I believe it is a vital intuition—would be affectation. Therefore I simply offer my collective, anonymous, and very sincere thanks to all those who, in one way or another, have collaborated in this enterprise of trying to "speak" of what is always worth babbling about, precisely because its ineffability makes us "touch" the very boundaries of the real.

My gratitude is deeper inasmuch as it is accompanied by a certain feeling that I have not been able to express my intuitions. I trust the reader will grasp what the text suggests beyond



its literal meaning and will also feel inspired by what is unsaid. This is not pure *retronica*,<sup>1</sup> as common parlance wisely puts it so as not to sully the positive meaning of rhetoric. Every reader is a part of the reading, and every reading is an interaction between author, text, and reader. There are texts that, through a mysterious link with the reader or, perhaps above all, with the author, seem to invite a banal, or at least literal, reading and do not let us rise up toward the unsaid, probably because this apophatic dimension of any authentic word has not been sufficiently "suffered" by either author or reader. The word—including the written word—possesses vibrations and resonances that are little short of infinite. And if the former are mainly the work of the author, the latter are up to the reader. This short text aspires to come closer to the *depths* of God, to use St. Paul's expression, and does so because it trusts in the *greatness* of Man, to complete the phrase in a trinitarian fashion. What I mean is that it is a book filled with silence: not a heavy silence but a silent silence, empty and light, like what we feel at the top of a mountain when the wind—that is, the Spirit—becomes still. The "world" is left down there, while the peak itself reposes in its slopes. Human silence comes at the end, after climbing the mountain, "transcending all science."

It is hard to describe my feelings on examining the version by my translators, whom I must thank here.<sup>2</sup> On rereading my work I realize my inability to communicate what I feel, and I have had to constantly restrain myself in order to avoid modifying and augmenting the text. There are points I would have liked to refine and ideas I would have preferred not just to express differently but to further examine and develop. Many topics have already been dealt with in my other writings and others are too simplified, but I have opted not to introduce any further revisions beyond those that leaped from the page on a critical reading of the translation.

I do maintain that this book, despite its spare and intellectual nature, contains an element of practical and direct application to today's human situation. This work is the fruit of a dialogical situation with the Vedāntic world. The fact that practice nourishes theory is not a novelty. True theory has always sprung from thematically examined practice. That is why mere repetition that is doctrinal and disincarnate from the real situation of Men is not even *theōreia*: it does not see the reality that is around it. The living Word is always incarnate. And it is from its incarnation in practice that the *logos* bursts forth with its redemptive—that is, liberating—discourse. We can already see in our time the appearance of trinitarian reflections emerging from a committed Christian life in the world. And it is also less rare to hear theological voices adopting a critical attitude toward a certain kind of Christian monotheism and its connection with totalitarianisms of every kind.

One of the premises of this book, which cannot be demonstrated here, goes even further and consists in the discrimination (I avoid the pro-independence term separation) between the Christic reality and the evangelic event—that is, in a dehistoricization of the Christian message, but one that avoids falling into old atemporal absolutizations of Christianity or "gnostic" readings. The interpretation of Christianity as a historical fact is valid and legitimate. But it is also the interpretation that dominated the first two millennia of Christian life. In the third millennium the *fides quaerens intellectum* of the Christian generations of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, if the latter do not lose their identity, will have to open up to the Christic event, without being exclusively based on the myth of history. And I would venture

<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note:* In the Spanish original, a metathetic form of the word "rhetoric," used in the pejorative sense of empty bombast.

<sup>2</sup> *Translator's note:* The author refers to the translation from Spanish to Italian, on which this translation is based.

to suggest that overcoming the myth of history in this way is not exclusive to the East as such or the Christian East, but a current requirement for the life of *Homo sapiens* who, having survived prehistory, must now detach himself from history to carry on living.

However, rather than continue down that route, for now I shall keep to what I was saying. To dehistoricize the Christic event does not mean to remove its basis as a historical fact, but simply not to identify its historicity with its reality. The Trinity we are speaking about is neither an absolute truth, independent of time and fallen down from heaven, nor an interpretation of a fact that is exhausted in history. It is a question neither of immobilizing Life with epistemological and axiological absolutisms, nor of reducing everything to historical contingencies and then preferring some over others. The dilemma is not relativism or absolutism, but the recognition of the radical relativity of all Reality. And with that we come closer to the Trinitarian mystery.

Let us repeat that it is not a question of defending the "God of History" but of understanding that the "History of God" is bound up with both human history and the history of the cosmos, and that all history must be overcome. I persist in my belief that liberation from history does not imply denying the reality of history or disengaging from the peoples' struggle for liberation, but it means not drowning in it. We are not slaves to destiny, and neither is destiny in our hands, but we ourselves are the hands of destiny—of a destiny that is higher than us and in which the divine is equally engaged. This is human dignity.

To put it differently, the liberation of Man—including his political liberation, most notably today—belongs to the very dynamism of the Trinity. This dynamism is also the *nexus* of the true spiritual life. Trinitarian spirituality is not split into a dichotomy between action and contemplation; it is not exhausted in a sterile activism, nor does it wither in a useless quietism. The so-called practice of the presence of God, for example, does not consist in the consciousness of the Presence of an Other who is with us or dwells in our innermost part; it does not consist in feeling the self-sufficient and more or less welcome Presence of a divine Being within us, but in existential realization or, to put it better, in the very act of conscious and free participation in the explosion of Life that represents the cosmotheandric adventure of Reality. And today this consciousness is concentrated in the very pains of a humanity and an earth that are subject to systematic and systematized injustice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"—for they partake in the very work of the Trinity. Is that not what is meant by being satisfied? True theology, which I would rather call philosophy, is a matter of life and death.

The hope that this short study may contribute to the emergence of a liberating praxis—from the depths of Deity—is perhaps what has urged me toward its publication.

Tavertet  
Pentecost 1988

## PROLOGUE

This study was written many years ago in Uttarkāshi in the heart of the Himalayas, in a small hut on the banks of the Ganges. The fact that my silence was broken or tested, and certainly enriched, by Swami Abhishiktānanda, to whom I send my *namaskāra* (greetings), made me write down my ideas in French. These "respectful greetings" are all the more heartfelt because Swamiji, who now lives within the hearts of so many people, ended his earthly existence in the very year in which I wrote these pages. It was Mary Rogers, to whom I express my thanks here, who kindly translated the unpublished French manuscript into English for an Indian edition that appeared in 1970, preceded by a German edition published in 1967. I myself revised the whole text for the English edition in another almost antipodean town, this time on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Human and physical geography have played a part in eliciting the universal character of these super-concentrated pages. Any human problem today that is not considered thematically against a perspective open to all humanity is destined to remain superficial and not to reach the depths of humanity, touching neither the heart of the matter nor the bounds of the divine. Indeed, any human problem that remains abstract and is not lived concretely in a real, and therefore limited, situation is destined to remain superficial and float in the muddy waters of mere generality.

It took a big effort to bring order to an experience without having at least five hundred pages available to develop it. I would need to write at that length to make myself understood, and to provide a treatise on the history and philosophy of the Trinitarian conception through the ages and within the various religious traditions of humanity. It is simply an unwarranted overstatement to affirm that the Trinitarian conception of Deity, and therefore of all Reality, is an exclusively Christian experience or revelation.

The question begins with a semantic problem. There is nothing more painful than what St. Thomas Aquinas, just when he was writing on the same mystery (*Sum Theol.* I, q.37, a.1), called the *inopia vocabulorum*, the poverty of words. The call of silence sometimes becomes almost overwhelming and often obsessive ("deep calling to deep," Ps 42:7). But the Word is intrinsic to Man. Moreover, Truth lies in interpretation, and we cannot renounce truth—even if every word contains a lie, inasmuch as it always says more and less than what both the speaker and the hearer can grasp.

The only human way to avoid the trap of words (like "God," "person," or "Man," in our case) is to resort to what tradition usually calls the *nexus mysteriorum*, the internal consistency and interrelatedness of the ultimate mysteries of the world (Denz.-Schön. 3016)—that is to say, the plausible congruency of a system of words within a certain worldview, so that one idea sustains the other and one concept fits into the space provided by another, thus providing a coherent and harmonious picture of the World. It is precisely because of this interconnection that when the frame of reference changes, the words must also undergo a similar process in order to convey the original ideas. The text is always dependent upon a context, and if it varies the text too has to change accordingly if its original message or meaning is to be preserved. Our words and our concepts are intelligible only within our conception of reality, which is

our present myth (as the ultimate frame of reference that we take for granted). It is only by reconstructing or reincarnating, so to speak, the traditional experiences of humanity that we can remain loyal to them and, furthermore, only thus can we deepen them and continue the true tradition. Genuine tradition does not consist in handing down dead formulae or anachronistic customs, but in passing on the flame of the life and the memory of Men. There is no *logos* without *myth* or *myth* without *logos*. In every *logos* there is a *myth*, the *myth* that the *logos* expresses. In every *myth* there is a *logos*, the *logos* that the *myth* communicates.

Myth and *logos* meet in the symbol. Man cannot live without symbols. The symbol is the true appearance of reality; it is the concrete form in which reality discloses itself to our consciousness, or rather, it is that particular consciousness of reality. It is in the symbol that the real appears to us. The symbol is not reality (which never exists naked, as it were) but its manifestation, its revelation. The symbol is not another "thing" but the epiphany of that "thing" which is not without its symbol—because ultimately Being itself is the supreme symbol. Any real symbol encompasses and unites both the symbolized "thing" and the consciousness of it.

All this is not a mere disquisition in defense of my own formulations regarding the Trinity. Rather, I am concerned with a more universal principle regarding words and phrases. The moment that words say exactly and exclusively what one means and do not leave any room for what another may mean, the moment that they become only signs and cease to be symbols, the moment that they only signal something and are no longer the expression, the manifestation, and thus, the very veil of that "something"—in that moment, they degenerate even as words. They become mere instruments for the transmission of messages in a code that is decipherable only by those who already possess the key. They are terms and signs instead of words and symbols. And so terms can very easily turn into instruments of power in the hands of those who dictate their meaning or know the key for deciphering the signs. There is no longer the need to interpret or to understand these signs; they are merely orders or general rules, but they are not part of you or revelations of reality. Through these signs you cannot pray or play, let alone be. You cannot truly speak with these so-called words, but only repeat them, aping those who have imposed this power over you. When an utterance designates only what one means and excludes the participation of the other in shaping the meaning of the word, it becomes barren. Then the utterance becomes closed in the speaker and excludes the listener, instead of allowing a flow of communication between parties who, by this very fact, could have not only come closer to each other in mutual fecundation but also together approached Reality and Truth. Every living word is dialogue.

Real words are not simply instruments in someone's hands; they are part of human, cosmic, and also divine interaction, and they mean what we all agree that they mean in the act of dialogical interchange. Otherwise they are not living words; they are dead: they "indoctrinate" instead of educating.

In the profound wisdom of India, certain concise and often cryptic maxims, rather like the crystallization of many words, were known as *sūtras*—threads or strings; in an aphoristic and "seminal" way, they try to unite us with some of the great intuitions of humanity. A *sūtra* is a suture that stitches together—not by means of artificial surgery but by the power of things themselves—the complex thoughts of more elaborate treatises and also ourselves with the reality revealed and concealed in the *sūtras* themselves.

This study is certainly not a treatise nor can it be a *sūtra* because the treatise, out of which the *sūtra* should be distilled, has not yet been written. The author does believe, however, that he is expressing not a particular opinion, but the paradigm of an experience that is destined to become more and more frequent in our time: the experience of gathering, or rather concentrating into one, the various human veins into which the fundamental insights

of humanity have accumulated. We no longer want to be the children of Eve or Manu, but sons of Man: *bar nāsā*.

The different traits considered here are brought together to form a web that represents one of the deepest intuitions Man has had and is still having, from different points of view and with different names: the intuition of the threefold structure of Reality, of the triadic unity, which exists at all levels of consciousness and Reality—the Trinity. We are not saying that the idea of the Trinity can be reduced to the discovery of a threefold dimension of Being, nor that this aspect is a mere rational discovery. We are simply affirming that the Trinity is the high point of a truth that permeates all realms of Being and Consciousness and that this vision links Men together.

In times of crisis and rapid change one of the greatest dangers and temptations consists in not being radical enough because of a lack of patience and depth, both of which are necessary in order to deal with the situation at its roots. We refer to the danger of banality, of remaining at the surface of things and events and of being content with statistics and a certain type of sociological description. The aim of this essay is exactly the opposite of an escape route into merely "speculative" or "theological" spheres as a desperate refuge from everyday life or the human problems that constantly press us on every side. Life in Europe, India, and America has taught and shown me that there are no questions more *urgent* than the fundamentally important issues, and that there is no more heartfelt need and no more excruciating thirst than the desire to deal with concrete human problems not only in a universal manner, but also in their essential meaning and at the level of their deepest roots. Man does not live by bread alone, and much less by words alone. Neither matter alone nor spirit alone is enough; Man cannot be without God, nor God without Man. Is the Trinity not the "place" where bread and word meet? A non-Trinitarian God could not "mingle" and much less unite himself with Man without destroying himself. He would have to remain separate and isolated. No kind of incarnation, descent, or true manifestation would be possible. He would cease to be God if he became Man. A non-trinitarian Man would not be able to go beyond his little "self" and become what he seeks and ardently yearns to be without destroying himself. He would have to remain detached and isolated. No divinization, glorification, or redemption of any kind would be possible. He would cease to be Man if he became God. Man would suffocate within himself, just as God would die from self-consumption, if the Trinitarian structure of reality did not exist.

Seen from this perspective the Trinity is one of the deepest and most universal visions Man can have about himself and God, about Creation and Creator. It is not only one of the most *important* problems in theory, but also one of the most *urgent* questions in practice. It represents one of those basic issues at the very root of our human situation with direct relevance to the need for a more just society and a more integrated human personality. The values of peace and human happiness, readiness to act, the goals of action and inspiration in art are not unrelated, nor are they independent of the ultimate horizon of human existence. They depend to a great extent on how Man lives his underlying myth, how he imagines his situation and his role in life—and these are all problems directly connected with the Trinity. The purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity, in fact, is not to satisfy our curiosity about the "immanent" Trinity as an internal premise of Deity (*ab intra*). It connects the immanent mystery with the "economic" God (*ad extra*), where the destiny of the whole world is at stake. It is not a mere speculation on the depths of God; it is equally an analysis on the heights of Man. It is a "revelation" of God to the same degree as it is a revelation of Man.

The disturbing modern dilemma, for example, between an unconvincing traditional theism and an even less convincing modern atheism is resolved by the Trinitarian conception.

Indeed, the Trinity makes it impossible to consider God either as a substance (which would amount to modalism or to tritheism) or as the totally "other" (this would be irredeemable dualism). "God" is *nomen potestatis non proprietatis*, the name of a function of power and not of an ontological attribute, in the words of an ancient confession of the Christian Credo, the *Fides Damiani* (Denz.-Schön. 71). Rejecting the notion of a "God" of endless scrutiny and judgment, of someone who deprives Man of his ultimate responsibility and allows intolerable human situations, represents a step forward in human maturity, as long as we do not stumble into the other extreme of the dilemma: that of a shortsighted atheism that is closed to true transcendence as well as genuine immanence. The idea of the Trinity maintains an openness in human existence, ensuring infinite possibilities and, while accepting atheistic criticism, opens up pathways of hope and freedom. The Trinity, in fact, reveals that there is life in Deity as well as in Man, that God is not an idol or a mere idea or an ideal goal of human consciousness. And so he is neither another substance nor a separate, and thus separable, reality.

We should not look for consensus in the common denominator, which would mean cutting away all that is positive, valuable, and distinctive, and focusing only on what is irrelevant and banal. It will not be found by abandoning theist claims and neutralizing atheist convictions, but by transcending both.

The same can be said in the field of the various world religions. A coalition against "disbelief" or in defense of "religious values" is not a communion of religions but simply a partisan strategy. If the religions of the world want to find common ground with each other and aim to serve contemporary Man, they have to forget "holy" alliances, overcome monopolistic attitudes, and come to grips with the central and fundamental issues, regaining those levels where understanding is possible without compromise and uniformity. The study of the Trinitarian structure of religious experience and of human beliefs can offer us another chance of fecundation, agreement, and collaboration not only between religions themselves, but also between them and modern Man, so often wounded by religious subtleties he cannot understand.

I must conclude this prologue with a word of sincere humility. The author is convinced of all that he says. He is also convinced that all that he says is not what he would want to say, but he does not know how to say it better, and until a certain kind of dialogue has taken place, it cannot be said better.

He is also convinced that what he says is only a hypothesis, a suggestion, and an invitation to take up that path where the divine depths and the human heights meet, where the necessary distinctions between philosophy and theology, matter and spirit, reason and faith, God and Man, one religious tradition and another, are not blurred, but not completely separated either.

There is an intuition that can be considered central in the pages that follow: a cosmoeandric and therefore nondualist vision of Reality. I can sum it up in three brief paragraphs.

The first refers to the universality of experience and the reality of the so-called three persons (in the singular and the plural) as represented by the personal pronouns. There are some languages that have no verb "to be" and others that do not possess the corresponding noun. In some there is no definite distinction between nouns and verbs. No known language lacks "I," "Thou," and "He" with their respective gender and plural forms. It is in this ultimate and universal structure that the Trinity is reflected or, to put it in theological terms, because the Trinity is "I, Thou, He" with their respective genders and plurals, human experience presents this character. The Trinity appears then as the essential paradigm (neither substantial nor verbal) of the personal relationship.

The second refers to the radical interrelation of all things, despite the artificial separations our minds tend to make when they lack the necessary patience and humility to consider the constitutive connections of all that exists. In one way or another, no total excommunication is true in the sphere of the real. These relations encompass and constitute the whole web of Reality. The Trinity as pure relation epitomizes the radical relativity of all that exists.

The third refers to the fundamental unity of Reality, which should not be overshadowed by the diversity of the universe. The variety of Beings, including the theological difference between the divine and "creation" or God and the world, should not eclipse the fundamental unity of Reality. It is in the human experience of the person that we have a clue to this mystery of unity and diversity and it is the Trinity that provides an excellent model of this all-pervading constitution of Reality. The person is neither a monolithic unity nor a disconnected plurality. A single, isolated person is a pure contradiction. The word "person" implies a constitutive relation, the relation expressed in the pronominal persons. An *I* implies a *thou*, and as long as this relation is maintained it also implies a *he-she-it* as the space where the *I-thou* relation takes place. An *I-thou* relation equally implies a dimension of the *we-thou* relation, which includes *they* in the same way as *he-she-it* is included in *I-thou*. On the other hand, the person, strictly speaking, does not allow for any plural since it is not quantifiable. Five persons are neither more nor fewer than ten persons. What we mean by those numbers is just individuals, but the individual is not exactly the person, but only an abstraction made for pragmatic reasons.

What we generally call a person is what presents the structure of a *thou*—the second person, if we still want to use "personalistic" language. This model helps us to understand better the Trinity and at the same time the mystery of the Trinity gives us the opportunity to better grasp the ultimate constitution of the real.

But in order to develop and substantiate all of this we would need the aforementioned "treatise," whereas what we offer here is just an invitation to participate more intensely in the gift of Life.

*Caritas Pater est,  
Gratia Filius,  
Communicatio Spiritus Sanctus,  
O beata Trinitas!*  
Santa Barbara, California  
Easter 1973

## INTRODUCTION

There exists a certain conception of the science of religions that is lacking in vitality—"sterilized," one might say—and always liable to stop short at the level of phenomenon: a conception that considers religions simply and solely as historical facts judged with reference to their cultural *manifestations*. The practical result of this is to identify a given religion with its *sociological form*—that is, with the "clothing" it assumes in a particular historical context. When we proceed to compare this religion, viewed from outside, with the faith and deep values of another religion or cosmovision, the latter lived from within, the result can only be negative toward the former. It is obvious that this kind of methodological error immediately invalidates any conclusion one might claim to draw from it. Penetration "within," then, is paramount if there is to be a genuine science of religions and an adequate discernment of spirits.

Now, on the other hand, it would appear that if one lives one's own religion with faith and from within, one is ipso facto obliged to reject or contradict other religions. Is it possible, while adhering sincerely and with conviction to one religion, to show oneself to be unprejudiced and just toward another? Does contemporary dialogue, in order to be sincere, require an abandonment or at least a methodological *epoché*, a setting aside or suspension, of one's own convictions? Where the answer to this question is yes, the science of religions has chosen to keep away from any religious commitment, believing this ensures its impartiality. Now, a consequence of this apparent neutrality is that we fall into the trap of fundamentally misconstruing the very core of religious belief. This happens because the faith of the believer (and not only the objectifiable doctrine) belongs essentially to the religious phenomenon and cannot be understood except by a certain kind of participation that I have called *pisteuma*, and it belongs to the phenomenology of religion just as *noëma* belongs to a phenomenology of the rational objects of consciousness.

While phenomenology allows us to compare religious phenomena, it only amounts, at the most, to a comparison of their structures or doctrines. It cannot take the place of the philosophy or theology of religions, which alone can make possible a reciprocal and profound understanding of the messages of different religions that can lead to a mutual fecundation.

In the present study we shall aim to acquire an understanding of the true interiority of religions from a point of view that is initially Christian, though not exclusive, in the hope that other points of view may converge in the dialogue. For my part, then, let me embark on a sincere soliloquy that may lead to dialogue, while remaining conscious of the fact that even the most perfect melody is a poor substitute for the grand symphony of which we have had a foretaste and to which we ardently aspire.

Any Christian who lives his faith and has a personal experience of the mystery of Christ will refuse to reduce Christian reality to the compass of his own individual experience, however precious and essential that experience may seem to him. Even less will he reduce it to any particular expression of Christianity manifested in a given period of history. Seen and lived from within, the reality revealed by faith is something far deeper than all the individual and



social forms it may assume and far richer than any translation that Man may use to explain it in cultural, philosophical, theological, or even religious terms. The same is true, of course, for any other traditional creed.

Paradoxically, the more one lives a faith subjectively—that is, the more one assimilates and makes it one's own—the more one becomes conscious of its objectivity and at the same time discovers a remnant that cannot be assimilated. In a word, there is a close and positive correlation between all authentic subjectivity and all true objectivity. Modernist subjectivity is erroneous when it eliminates objectivity, but even more erroneous is conservative objectivity (and legalism), which stifles all true subjectivity.

The distinction between *essence* and *form* is vital nowadays for all religious consciousness, particularly that of Christianity. The claim to catholicity, to universality, requires its dissociation from any sort of cultural garment, which is an especially difficult task for Christianity because of the ponderous Greek heritage that impels it almost irresistibly to regard the *morphé*—the form of a thing—as its essence. In a theology or philosophy where *nāma-rūpa*, name and form, is in one way or another the expression of the simple appearance of things, a change of forms would be far simpler. Moreover, for a culture that, despite the progressive secularization of the concept of *logos* to the point of reducing it to a synonym for reason, has still not completely forgotten its divine origin and thus still retains atavistic traces of the respect owed to Deity, any change of *logoi* becomes highly suspect. However, that is not the only possible way of accepting and recognizing the one who said, "The Father is greater than I," and refused outright the title of "good," the one who was stripped and humbled, the one who told us, "If a grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die . . ." We can go even further: Christian stripping should be complete. The faith of the Christian must strip itself of "Christian belief" as it currently exists and free itself for a fecundation that will affect all religions, ancient and modern. From a sociological and external point of view, Christianity is just one religion among others. One can therefore compare Christianity with other religions because it is one among the rest. From a sociological and even "scientific" point of view, one cannot consider Christianity as *the* religion par excellence, as though the rest were not religions or were false religions. On the contrary, the Christian faith (though others may prefer to call it simply human) leads to *fullness* and hence to the *conversion* of all religion, even though its specificity is a problematic issue that goes beyond the limits of this essay.

Christian faith, in any case, lives within time and in the hearts of Men. It requires, therefore, to be "incarnated" in a concrete historical form; but what we call Christianity is only one of the many forms in which the Christian faith can be lived and fulfilled. In fact, the dominant form in which Christianity is lived today is the one it has gradually adopted over the course of the history of the Western world. We have no right to identify this particular sociological form with Christian faith in itself. To do so would involve on the one hand a particularism incompatible with catholicity and on the other an anachronistic theological colonialism that is absolutely unacceptable today.

Just as it is not possible to stop the evolving process of history at a given point, so it is even less possible to start all over again, *ab ovo*, from scratch. The current forms or expressions of Christianity, even its theological ones, may have become worn, but we cannot abandon them outright or replace them with others that may appear more appropriate at this particular juncture, without taking into account the claims of tradition—that is to say, the historical link between past and future. To do so would be not only brutal but false and ultimately impossible. Continuity must not be broken; development must occur harmoni-

ously, enrichment progressively, and transformation in accordance with nature. This process must involve a sui generis assimilation of new values or come about through the emergence of hitherto neglected aspects—in a word, by a *vital process of growth* in which substitution happens less by rejection than by adoption.

Such a process is called for first by a continuous need for truth, particularly today with ever-increasing insistence and ever-growing urgency, since it constitutes the true *kairos* of our time, a *kairos* that is demanded both by this modern world, which challenges traditional religions with its own values that it refuses to call religious, and also by the mutual encounter between religions that is producing deep changes in their respective self-understanding.

In these pages I wish to suggest certain reflections that can contribute to this deepening and deconditioning of faith so necessary in our times. In undertaking this task I intend above all to follow a method of rigorous religious validity without adopting a sectarian viewpoint for the benefit of just one group. By contributing to the deconditioning of Christianity in the practical realization of its catholicity, we collaborate in the progress of all religions toward harmony. There is no reason here for criticizing certain religious forms that may be good in themselves and even indispensable to Man at certain stages of the development of his consciousness and of the course of history; rather, I am attempting to trace out the guidelines that faith seems obliged to follow in order to become deeper and more universal. If I take Christianity as my starting point it is not out of partiality or sectarianism but because it is necessary to start somewhere and because I believe Christianity in particular is called to "suffer" this purifying transformation. In fact, today it seems to be Christians who feel most intensely the urgency of such an "opening."

I emphasize that I believe this interpretation to be authentically *orthodox*—that is to say, it gives God a truly right (*orthos*) honor and glory (*doxa*)—and therefore to be fully ecclesial. I am not unaware, on the other hand, of the difficulties and dangers of using expressions that may not be very common. I hope they will always be interpreted in accordance with the whole profound tradition of the church since the beginning of time.

After studying the three most characteristic forms of spirituality that are to be found as human constants in the majority of religions, we shall venture to describe the *theological* problem of the Trinity, that mystery that out of reverential awe has been virtually condemned to oblivion in a large part of Christianity. In the third part of our study we shall try to outline the profile of what we could call, following an ancient tradition, *theandris* (and which today I would prefer to call *cosmotheandris*)—that is, the fundamental attitude by which we are able to understand and share the basic insights of most of the world's religions. This approach attempts to open up an avenue to which a purely intellectual exchange of ideas or an *epoché* of faith could never give access.

For many years I have hesitated to publish these reflections; I wondered whether I should not have developed them into a larger volume, with all the baggage of scientific and theological documentation required for a fuller exposition and justification of my views. However, at the risk of offering here only a preliminary sketch, I have finally decided to share this framework with others for it to be corrected and developed—and also to be experienced and lived.

During this period I have made an effort to clarify my thought as much as I could. I have realized by so doing that a piece of writing is not only, as I had thought, a gesture and an expression of an attitude but also a communication. People frequently tell me that it is not so much a question of expressing myself as of conveying my thoughts to the reader. And so I accept mediation and the communicative role of ideas, and once again I immerse myself in life.

Let me make one last observation. If I have decided to publish this text as it is, without the numerous notes that might lend it greater authority, it is precisely because it is more a meditation than an erudite study, more a mystical and "prayerful" theology than an analytical and reflexive philosophy (though we must refrain from pressing the distinction to the point of dichotomy). It is in Faith, Hope, and Love that the following pages have been lived. I refer to the past, for of my present life I cannot speak.

## FORMS OF SPIRITUALITY

We shall start by defining *spirituality*, pragmatically and phenomenologically, as a typical way of dealing with the human condition. To express the idea in more religious terms, we could say that spirituality represents Man's fundamental attitude toward his ultimate end. In either case I think the following classification will help us see our way through the dense forest of world religions. One of the features that differentiates a spirituality from an institutionalized religion is that the former is far more flexible, since it stands at the margins of the complex of rites, structures, and so on, that are indispensable to all religions. Indeed, one religion may embrace various spiritualities, because spirituality is not directly bound to any dogma or institution. It is rather an attitude of mind that can be ascribed to different religions.

It would be possible to put forward a long list of classifications, but I consider that the one I am adopting is acceptable from several points of view. It belongs in fact to more than one religious tradition and offers us a trinitarian formulation that is applicable to many of them. Furthermore this framework is anthropologically justified inasmuch as it corresponds with the actual constitution of Man. Finally, it does not proceed from an *a priori* construction but emerges from an empirical assessment of the situation.

My exposition of the topic will clarify these remarks, but in order to proceed without undue delay we may define three forms of spirituality: those of action, of love, and of knowledge. To put it in other terms, these are spiritualities centered around iconolatry, personalism, and mysticism.

A man may seek to develop and perfect his "human" condition by adopting an image, an idol, an icon that is simultaneously outside (attracting), inside (inspiring), and above (directing). This is what gives the right orientation and stimulus for action to the life of Man, his moral character, his thoughts, and his aspirations.

One may also attempt to establish another kind of relationship with what I define as (for want of a better name) the Absolute. One may consider it as the mystery hidden in the depths of the human soul that can be revealed and activated by love through an intimate personal relationship and by dialogue. In this case God is not only the essential pole that orientates, so to speak, the human personality, but also its constitutive element, because one cannot live or "be" without love and one cannot love without that third dimension of verticality, which is only realized in the discovery of the divine person.

The third form of spirituality highlights the rights of thought and the needs of reason, or rather of the intellect or intuition; it rejects a God constructed more or less according to the measure and the needs of Man and seeks to penetrate the ultimate analysis of Being and to find there a vision that enables Man to live in full acceptance of his humanity.

Of course the examples given are purely illustrative; this does not purport to be a historical study or the account of an evolutionary process in time. I would prefer to call it an essay in *kairological* dialectics. These incursions into the past are attempted here in order to keep our finger on the pulse of our time.

### Iconolatry—*Karmamārga*

To explain what I mean, the word that first springs to mind is "idolatry." I might well choose this word out of a desire to defend the good name of many so-called idolaters against the caricature that has often been drawn of what is in reality one of the most important expressions of adoration and religiousness. However, the fact that we cannot deny the misuse and the degradations that still derive from this primordial human need, together with the unpleasant impression left by the word in many people's minds, has led me to abandon its use and coin the term *iconolatry* to indicate Man's primary and primordial attitude toward Deity or mystery (be it *fascinans*, *tremendum*, or any other kind).

The question of whether God made Man in his own image and likeness is open to discussion, but it is undeniable that Man has forged, or carries deep inside him, an idea of divinity as a Being in his own image and likeness.

Otherwise it would be impossible for him to come into contact with the divine either by word or concept. We will try to describe this attitude by taking a somewhat paradoxical example, that of the people of Israel, which has frequently been cited as being the very opposite of the iconolatrous attitude.

No one can deny that, through its long history, ancient Israel was a people seriously tempted by idolatry. Not only did they fall from time to time into what their law considered the supreme sin, that sin that YHWH repeatedly condemned through the mouth of his prophets, but if we look carefully and consider Israel's spirituality as a whole—its idea of God and the whole of its cult—we can see that the religion of Israel does indeed belong to the category of idolatrous, or rather iconolatrous, religions. Idolatry constitutes a kind of leitmotif running through all the books of the Old Testament. This is why the cult of *false* idols was for Israel both the greatest sin and the greatest temptation. Grass is not a temptation for a lion, and a cow is not attracted to meat!

There is a fundamental distinction, in the eyes of Israel, between the Jewish type of idolatry and that of neighboring peoples. The idol of Israel was certainly not an object made by hand or created by thought, far less by the invention or discovery of Man. The proper and specific idol of Israel was YHWH, the living and true God, the One who had revealed himself to this people and made a pact with them. Israel's idol was not only a real idol but also a true one: it symbolized the Truth. And yet the fact the YHWH represented Truth made no difference to the nature of the relationship he had with his people. A morphological study of the religion of Israel and the religions of the surrounding Canaanite peoples would quickly show that, for the faithful, YHWH and the Gods of the *gohim* were placed on the same level. This is how we explain the continuous struggle described in the Bible between YHWH, Sabaoth, and his "rivals"—the other Gods, the Gods of the nations. In order to maintain his position as the one and only idol of Israel, YHWH had to fight them, and did so with all the vigor we see from the text. The other Gods were false Gods precisely because they were false idols. We need not discuss their power or their relative and limited sovereignty; we can simply state that for Israel these Gods did not constitute the icon that corresponds to the biblical theophany of God. Rivalry only occurs between realities of the same order. Coming back

to the example mentioned above we might say that you cannot have antagonism between cows of the pasture and fish of the sea.

It is beyond the scope of this study to describe in detail how the cults of YHWH and of the other Gods are morphologically equivalent. One need only read the Bible and the historical accounts of the Gods of Moab and Assyria as an example. In any case the Israelites were consummate idolaters; they did not need anyone to teach them how to fashion and pay homage to idols. Even at the time of their desert experience it only needed forty days without their leader Moses for them to put up a golden calf in the place of their living but invisible icon of YHWH. Their whole history goes along the same lines. YHWH *exists* in the Ark and lives in his Temple just as Astaroth, Baal, and Dagon live in theirs. The Jews speak of, behave toward, and pray to YHWH in the same way as the Canaanites do to their Gods. They worship him as an idol is worshiped, since the essence of iconolatry is not rooted, as we shall explain later, in the material nature of the idol but in the fact of attributing to God creaturely qualities and attributes that are refined to a greater or lesser extent and can be ascertained by various procedures.

We should add at once that iconolatry represents a normal dimension of the religious life of human beings and even of the manifestation of God to Man. Do not the church fathers teach us that the Lord in his condescension always adapted himself to the needs and capacities of Man, only manifesting himself in accordance with Man's ability to receive his message and put it into practice? This evolution of knowledge is similarly observable in the individual. Religion, in fact, could not exist without some traces of iconolatry, just as, for example, without some traces of impurity in the physical elements, no chemical reaction would take place. A "chemically pure" religion is inconceivable except in the context of an individualism that is artificially "pure" and very far from Man as he really is, *in statu nascendi*, in a state of becoming.

And so, is it iconolatry itself that is really under attack from the prophets, or is it rather false idolatry, that of the rivals of YHWH? The essence of the *Torāh* demonstrates the exclusive nature of God's revelation to the chosen people. "Hear, O Israel. . . . *Thou shalt have no other God than Me*" (Dt 5:1; 6:14). It is the exclusivism of the lover. This imperative used toward Israel is not applicable to other peoples. It is a manifestation of the God of Israel, who is above the other Gods. For Israel YHWH is the Supreme Lord (see Dt 6:4), and therefore he is also a "jealous God" (Dt 5:9; 6:15). Although under the influence of the later prophets the Israelite conception of God would undoubtedly become "purified," it would never completely lose its iconolatrous character.

Christianity, which inherited the legacy of the Jewish prophets, has always exhibited a kind of instinctive horror of idolatry—and this never failed to create tragic misunderstandings when Christianity came into contact with the religions of Africa and Asia. The most widespread religious Christian attitude seems to lend considerable support to our thesis. In general it is still proclaimed aloud that idolatry is the most degraded and degenerate religious form. Those who, in accordance with this view, snatch the wooden or stone idol brusquely from its stand or niche hasten to install in its place, as the object of similar worship, the God-icon of Israel or the image or idea that they made for themselves of God revealed in Christ. "We already have Kṛṣṇa," as a Hindū would say. "Why do you want us to put your Christ in his place? One icon is as good as another."

We are not interested here, if I may repeat it once more, in either defending or condemning iconolatry. We are merely maintaining that the spirituality of Israel, based on the concept of a God who speaks, punishes, pardons, is jealous, ordains laws, can be offended and also

appeared—who commands, promises, and makes pacts with men, and so forth—belongs phenomenologically to the category of iconolatry, since such behavior appertains to all icons. The sole difference—a fundamental one for the sons of Abraham—is that in one case there is involved the living and true God, invisible, creator of the world, and in the others only an identification, often a hasty and immature one, between a concrete idol and the supreme God.

After all, in what does iconolatry consist if not in the projection of God in some form, his objectivization, his personification in an object that may be mental or material, visible or invisible, but always reducible to our human "representation"? Iconolatry is in fact religious cosmoanthropomorphism, the attribution to God of "creaturely" forms, whether supra-human or subhuman. It makes no difference whether these forms are gross or subtle, whether the iconolater is conscious or not of his intimate religious attitude, or indeed that he recognize that the iconolatric *signi* is provisional and must yield to the underlying reality (the *res*) when the time comes. In the final analysis the icon symbolizes the homogeneity that subsists between God and his creature; and this same homogeneity constitutes the condition of religion, of the *re-ligatio* that "binds together" God and Man so that they are no longer independent and heterogeneous realities. If God were completely Other, there would be no place for love and knowledge or for prayer and cult, no place ultimately for God-himself-as-Other. Man gives himself for his icon, submits to his icon and is devoted and abandoned to his icon, because his destiny is intimately bound to that of his icon. The icon is neither impassable nor inaccessible; it is involved in the human adventure. There is mutuality between the icon and the worshiper. Man loves his icon-God because this God has become for him stone, wood, flesh, and idea (ideal). Who could spend himself for the pure Transcendent (see *Gītā* XII.5)? The pure Transcendent, by definition, does not concern us, because it is impassable, unchangeable, and removed from the human condition. YHWH, who suffered for Israel, was the true icon; his honor was closely interwoven with that of his people. Out of love for the people of Israel he manifested himself to them as their icon at one particular historical moment in the evolution of the religious consciousness of humanity. If cows had some knowledge of God, how would they imagine him except by starting from their cowlike state? A God who lacked any relation of resemblance with them could not possibly be their God. Iconoclasm, therefore, is a sin against the First Commandment.

At this point let us go on to clarify our thesis further. There are two things: idolatry and iconolatry. Idolatry, understood as transferring to a creature the adoration due to God alone—that is, adoration that stops short at the object, without going beyond it in a progressive movement toward the Creator, the Transcendent—is without doubt the gravest of sins. But iconolatry, which begins by *worshipping* an object on which the glory of the Lord has descended, and takes this object as the starting point for a slow and arduous ascent toward God, cannot be condemned and rejected so easily. Furthermore, there exists within all idolatry a more or less latent experience of the icon—that is to say, an experience of an iconological kind, which is an essential dimension in all truly human spirituality. This experience of the likeness (*eikōn*) between God and Man, of the fact that God is in the image (*eidōlon*) of Man and of the ontological link between the two, needs to be cultivated.

To highlight a parallelism to which we shall revert later, we can now introduce the concepts of *karman*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna* (action, love, and knowledge), which in the religions of India represent various ways of spirituality. *Karmamārga*, the way of sacred action—that is, ritual action that leads to salvation, the fulfillment of duty, realization of one's *dharma*, obedience to the law, the keeping of the commandments, and so on—is the first spiritual

dimension. If there were no God-icon to command and make laws, none of this would make sense. A "philosophical" God, pure Beginning, Immovable Mover, and the like cannot be the foundation of a living religion.

Now we need to reach an agreement *on* words, but also *with* words—and here theological wisdom comes into play—by respecting the words and not manipulating them arbitrarily. Now the word "idol" was introduced to designate a material object, generally man-made, that was adored as God. The idol is thus made by human craft, and as such is inferior to Man, so to worship it is the worst of sins (Is 44:9ff.). We would like, however, to make two observations on this point, one on behalf of a great number of "idolaters" and the other based on more general considerations.

If we take idolatry as the act of offering to a creature the adoration that is only due to the Creator, can we be sure that so-called idolaters always reflect this transference and so fall into this confusion? Is it not the same as in polytheism, which appears so only to one who is not a polytheist just because two different meanings are applied to the word *theos*? Is not the falsity of idolatry rooted, not in the existential act of adoration itself, but in the interpretation the believer may have of his own adoration? Idolatry is not false simply as *latrôa* (worship) but it is false as the objectivization of such worship. All *latrôa* presupposes an idol, an icon, or an image; but is "idolization" worse than "idealization" or "objectivization"? Moreover, is there not a belief that most revered idols were found or originated in mysterious ways, so that they cannot be said to express just human craftsmanship? If the idol is a true image of Deity—if one does not lose sight of the iconic nature of the idol—then iconolatry has a place in every true religion, because it becomes erroneous only when the idol is cut off from its iconological connection with Deity. Could we not say, then, that Israel went beyond true idolatry as distinct from false? False idols are nonexistent because there is only one God (see the context of 1 Cor 8:4ff.).

So we come to our second observation. No one can jump over his own shadow. Iconolatry is one of the basic forms of human religious consciousness. Even in the Judeo-Christian context, and even more so in the Semitic and Mediterranean religious world, the iconological and thus idolatrous dimension of Deity occupies the foreground. Man is the image of God, the world a divine "imprint," and the presence of the Infinite is always a presence of incarnation. How easily understandable, then, is Man's tendency to worship the divine icon under the form of one idol or another! Also quite consistent with what we have said is the fact that meat sacrificed in the temples was called *eidôlothyton* (sacrificed to an idol) by Jews and Christians, while those who offered it called it *hierôthyton* (slain as sacred or offered in sacrifice).

The icon does not need to be graphically represented. On the contrary, any iconomorphic spirituality will tend to suppress all those kinds of icons that do not fit its fundamental iconological model: Israel will not allow "idols," Islam will not permit painted images, tribal religions will not care much for "ideas" on the divine (theologies), and so on. The fundamental attitude, however, of an iconolatric spirituality is the cultic act of adoration of an "image" of God, in the belief that it always represents the true God. This act allows us to call this spirituality *karmamārga* or way of action in order to reach "salvation," which means the end and fulfillment of Man, however that is interpreted.

The history of religions shows us other basic religious attitudes that are not centered upon the conception of a God-icon, and we shall refer to them presently. Looking at the subject from this new perspective, we discover a close relationship between true and false idolatry that may well be surprising to Jewish, Christian, and indeed Muslim monotheism. At this point the conception of the Trinity offers us the opportunity to transcend, without denying outright, the spirituality of the idol, the icon, the image, or the idea.



### Personalism—*Bhaktimārga*

If *karmamārga* tends toward the *personification* of God, *bhaktimārga* tends toward a *personal* God.

Along with her Scriptures, ancient Israel bequeathed to Christianity her iconological conception of God. Undoubtedly this conception was "purified" and transformed both by reflection on the New Testament and by the progressive development of Man's consciousness, as is clear from the later development of Judaism. But it is very much the Old Testament concept of YHWH, the God-icon of Israel, that forms the basis of the Christian idea of God. The official prayer of the church continues to be based on the same of psalms, recited and chanted in the Temple of Jerusalem, despite its containing religious sentiments and attitudes very distant from the spirit of the gospel.

Of course we have no right to reduce to oversimplified outlines the complex evolution of the concept of God within Christianity, and it would be inconceivable to reduce the picture to a few rather negative indications. But if we dare to outline a few lines of development here, with a certain frankness perhaps, our aim above all is to illustrate the possibility of a complementary contribution that would break the historical boundaries of Christianity as at present constituted—without wishing in any way to diminish the incomparable Western contribution to the incarnation of the Christian spirit.

It is clear that the concept of God in the Gospels, especially in St. John, is far removed from that of YHWH in the Jewish tradition. Whatever the historical reasons why Jesus was condemned, it was not for calling himself divine—the idea of the divinization of Man was not that new or scandalous—but for proclaiming himself the Son of God (in the Trinitarian, as it was later called, meaning of the phrase)—that is to say, the only-begotten of God, equal to Him and proceeding from Him. In other words, it was for having challenged the people of Israel by presenting himself as the divine icon, which commands obedience and adoration and which must be followed and even "eaten." In the eyes of the Jews the crime of Jesus, at least according to the Christians of the first generations, was that he dared to supplant YHWH, the icon of Israel, and take his place. If the "people of God" had refused to worship "other Gods," they must certainly reject even more vigorously one who presumed to assert that the Messiah was not a king in the "line" of David but the true icon of the Deity, the perfect image of YHWH, begotten directly by Him. YHWH can have no image because he is himself the Icon. It is impossible to make images of God on earth because there are no archetypes in heaven to which they may correspond. Only the Trinity can rescue iconolatry. Often the early church fathers regarded the theophanies of the Old Testament and other sacred oracles as manifestations of the Word.

It is not our task here to linger over the exegetical debate on whether God, the "son of Man," did literally proclaim himself "son of God," a claim that would be meaningless within strict monotheism. It seems unquestionable, however, that the figure of his "Father" did not agree with the orthodox conception of YHWH, although Jewish mysticism, generally at a later period, may present an idea of Deity that is closer to that of Jesus, as is the case with almost every mysticism.

In any case, the Trinitarian scandal, which according to the theology of the first centuries cost Jesus his life, became blurred over time. Almost imperceptibly, some Christian consciousnesses let themselves slip again into the legalism that Paul had denounced with such vigor. This is an important, if neglected, issue in political theology. The Trinity does not fit with the Christian Empire. From the doctrinal point of view, speculative progress in the approach to the Trinitarian mystery was not sufficiently accompanied by corresponding progress in the

mystical experience of this mystery and had little influence on the life and prayer of the Christian. East and West were divided on this issue; while for many, the Trinity became practically a triple idol, for others it progressively yielded its place even in prayer to the so-called divine nature, with the constant temptation of relegating the mystery of the Trinity to something ineffable "beyond" itself (a *divinitas* above the Father). Man had reduced the Trinity to one or three images, and it is always possible to go beyond an image. For a great number of Christians the Trinity became simply an abstract notion, and for them God remained the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the great icon whom it behooves us to worship, to appease, to please, and to obey. It is true that he was called Father (which implies a Son, and so on), but his characteristics had altered very little. He was still the Judge, Creator, Preserver, and Revealer—in fact, the Other. There was, besides, a very good excuse and a real basis for this: the simple recognition of the qualities of the Divine in the person of Jesus. The monolithic monotheism of orthodox Judaism was revived in a certain way of living Christianity. For many, Jesus became simply the God of the Christians, and this indeed is the impression conveyed to Hindus, for example, when they occasionally hear the gospel preached. Christians are for them those people who worship God under the name and form of Jesus.

This process leads to a parallel and complementary development in Christian consciousness, resulting in what today we call *personalism*. Ancient cosmo-anthropomorphism is transformed, and religious life is now required to be based on the concept of *person*. Henceforward it is our personal relations with God that matter because only they, it is claimed, constitute true religion. Is not religion fundamentally a dialogue between persons? Thus, wise men of all ages have viewed personalism as the distinguishing feature of any adult religion, and in this direction they desire to orient the religious development of humanity, starting with the formation of the Christian consciousness. The great scandal of Hinduism—according to Christians—is that it does not believe in God as a person.

For example, in religious personalism, obedience is no longer unconditional submission as it is in idolatry, but the acknowledgment of God's prerogative to command. Love is no longer the outburst of spontaneous affection or unconscious ecstasy but mutual giving. Cult no longer means annulment of the self before the Absolute but the voluntary affirmation of his sovereignty. Sin is no longer a cosmic transgression but a refusal to love, and so forth.

Predestination, so-called, and the associated notion of divine providence are striking examples of this same tendency. God foresees; God predestines because He is the One who loves, judges, forgives, punishes, and rewards—in short, does everything a person does. If we remove the imperfections of created Beings and allow what remains to proceed in stages upward along the "path of eminence," we will find the divine person at the end of the process. We call God a personal Being because we ourselves are persons, and we consider God a Being because we ourselves are Beings. If we desire to *ascend* toward God we can only begin with creatures—that is, with ourselves. The *via ascensionis* of Man, as such, toward God cannot but meet the Person. But there is also a *via descensionis* (from God toward man) that is not necessarily the same path in reverse. It was by another path that the Magi returned to their countries.

However that may be, Christianity has been progressively more identified with personalism, and it has been concluded that Christian faith cannot take root where the concept and the experience of what is meant by a person are either unknown or insufficiently developed, since it is impossible to enter into a filial relationship with God when he has not been discovered as a *person*.

As in the case of iconolatry, we have no intention here of contesting personalism. We just want to guard against drawing exclusive conclusions or hasty extrapolations. Religious personalism is, after all, nothing other than a form of spirituality. Personalism and iconolatry are, in differing degrees, dimensions inherent in every religion, corresponding to different stages of consciousness. Personalism, however, has no more right than iconolatry to identify itself with religion, since it is incapable by itself of exhausting the variety and richness of the experience of Mystery. In so far as it claims to do so, it denies its religious value and irremediably turns into pure anthropomorphism.

The way of devotion and love, *bhakti-mārga*, is the normal blossoming of the personalistic dimension of spirituality. The gift of oneself to the Lord and the love of God necessarily require a meeting, an acceptance, and a mutual communication between persons. The love of God cannot be inferior to human love, for if it were, the "Beloved" could neither respond to nor love us with the intensity and purity that characterize human love. Love of God would be destined to disappear if there were no dialogue, no tension, no impulse toward union. "I do not desire to cease to be," says the *bhakta*, "not from fear of losing myself, but because love would then cease, because then I could no longer love. I do not seek union but love. And it is not for myself that I yearn for love but for him. What would happen if he could not love me? There are difficulties, undoubtedly, when one tries to understand, when one tries to examine with the intelligence the mystery of love. I feel there is someone who loves me and whose love drives me to respond with my own love, albeit in imperfect form, in the hope of being able to embrace him one day—a day that will know no end. And if to avoid the danger of a theoretical dualism I were forced to vanish in his arms, not only would love be destroyed but the true life of the Deity too. God can only be a person." This is the conclusion of the *bhakta*, the one who loves.

If the desire for *incarnation* characterizes our first dimension of spirituality, and its greatest temptation is false idolatry, then the thirst for *immanence* is the driving force behind personalism, and its great temptation is anthropomorphism. Union with God, indeed, finds its most perfect expression in the community of love and even more so in personal communion. God is an "I" who calls me and names me "thou," and in calling me gives me my Being and my love—that is, my own capacity to respond to him.

However, in one whole part of the religious and spiritual tradition of humanity we find an experience of the Mystery that takes a quite different form from that proposed by personalism. The *Upaniṣads*, for example, testify to a conception and an experience of Reality that fit poorly into the framework of a personalist spirituality. This experience cannot be reduced to the outpourings of love of the *bhakta*. Is there not in fact in all love an egoistic streak that, in the very act, in the very bosom of love, brings about the death of that same love? Love demands self-denial, but when this self-denial is total, does not the object of love disappear and does not love itself vanish in this disappearance? Does not the same thing happen with love as with *ahimsā*—the principle of nonviolence—which, carried to its extreme consequences, represents the most complete annihilation and denies and contradicts the principles that inspired it? To avoid killing any Being, one consigns oneself to death and brings others as well. By refusing to renounce love, which fusion with the Beloved would cause to disappear, one kills love itself, for in order to be capable of continuing reciprocal love, one must at all costs maintain separation and distance, which are the indispensable conditions for mutual love; but, on the other hand, it is this same love and not only knowledge that leads to an identification, that seems to destroy reciprocity. Thus, it would seem that there remains still room for a final step. Nonviolence does not imply a lack of strength, nor does love necessarily require dualism.

*Advaita—Jñānamārga*

The book of Acts and St. Paul's letters are evidence of the deep crisis of universalism through which the church passed in the second decade of her history. Can we truly say that after twenty centuries the church has entirely overcome this initial crisis of catholicity? Perhaps we should recognize that the tension, which was evident from the beginning, is actually part of the existence of a pilgrim church. In those days calling the "gentiles" directly to Christ was surely very distressing to the pillars of the church (Gal 2:9), as the Council of Jerusalem records (Acts 15). But is not twentieth-century Christianity still more or less disoriented by this appeal for universalism that is now being directed toward the church from all sides? Can we sincerely say that the church has moved ahead from the stage of the first council or that it has effectively applied its decisions in their original spirit and in all their implications? Has not Christianity remained morphologically a Semitic religion? The most convincing proof of this is the anti-Semitism that the church tolerated, more or less, in the past, even if nowadays she feels morally bound to condemn it. One does not attack something with vehemence unless it touches something in the deepest part of one's being. The church has never cut the umbilical cord that tied it to the synagogue, but, without denying this basic relationship, can we say that the Christian conception of the Mystery has gone beyond the iconolatric stage inherited from Israel? Has the church gone much beyond an iconology purified and corrected by a personalism to which the development of the Western world has given rise?

Let us be clear here. We are by no means seeking to minimize the privilege of the chosen people or to disparage their special position in the divine economy. Still less would we wish to imply any disrespect for the Old Testament. It was without doubt Israel's election at a specific moment in the historical and religious development of humanity that constituted her unique glory. At the same time, the greatness of Israel's religion lies in the fact that it is ready to transcend itself. The vocation of Israel, as later Judaism was to affirm, is to bear a burden in the name of all humanity in the interests of freedom, without preventing anyone else from bearing it. Are Christians ready to recognize that something similar can, or must, happen to Christianity itself in its third millennium?

On the other hand, however, is not this attachment to a Semitic sociocultural context, or to a Mediterranean one, the very root of the tragic misunderstanding between Christian faith and the various world religions that are still alive, and lived with intensity?

Let us also recall, though without undue emphasis, a basic problem, that of the *relativity*—not the relativism—of the concept of God. God is only God for and with reference to a creature. God is not "God" for himself. The idea of worship is inherent to the concept of God. It would be an absurdity to say that God can worship himself. It is only the *incarnate* Son who calls his Father God, and in the great theophanies of the Old Testament YHWH always reveals himself as the God of those to whom he is manifesting himself. He never says, "I am *my* God!" but "I am *your* God." God is *our* God. Without us and without our relation to him, God would not be "God." God is not God in himself; he is so only for and therefore through the creature.

We should not forget the historical and linguistic origin of the word *God*. Christianity received it from the Indo-European languages and religions: *deva*, *theos*, *zeus*, *deus*, *gop*. Far from being originally a designation of the Absolute or a metaphysical expression of the One, it was generally employed in the plural, like the corresponding Semitic *elohim*. The singular was usually only used to indicate the victory or supremacy of one of the Gods over the rest, or to specify the particular God of a given people or country, or the God who rules over one particular aspect of the cosmos (rain, fire, thunder, and so on).

Not even the Christian concept of God can fail to be affected by the historical horizon in which it emerges. It refers, no doubt, to the experience of the "Absolute," but also to that of a theophany (YHWH) and an epiphany (Jesus), as they were manifested at a certain time and place. God was thought of and professed in a particular mental and sociological context and expressed in a given language or family of languages. Pascal was right in observing that the God of the philosophers was not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why should we be surprised then that other "philosophers"—and, more specifically, other thinkers—find difficulty in identifying the "Absolute" with the God of the Patriarchs and of the Judeo-Islamic-Christian credo?

A concept of Deity that is limited to the traditional cultural framework of the Mediterranean world will meet with a number of serious difficulties. One needs only to consider certain metaphysical issues that unrelentingly haunt thinkers and theologians, like the existence of evil and suffering; the difficulty, if not impossibility, of reconciling human liberty with divine will; the concept of "person"; and so on.

Our own age is very sensitive to the problems raised by the personalist conception of God. If God is a person, he corresponds very poorly to the human ideal of a person. Does he not show himself too often as a father who is indifferent to evil and who seems to rejoice in the suffering of his children? As the price of sin he demands the blood of his Son and does not hesitate to sacrifice him out of "love" for Men. Does that not seem like cruelty or sadism? Or is it that God is subject to a law of justice or to a destiny above himself? He requires our prayers, but except for rare exceptions, he does not seem to care in the least or even to reply. Is he powerless, then, to create a better world? If not, why has he sought or at least allowed the world to be as it is, so unsatisfactory and ill-suited to promoting the well-being or joy of his children? If the essence of love and of personal relations is dialogue, then why is this dialogue not possible with him in a genuinely interpersonal sense? This was essentially Job's lament in seeing himself forced into a "dialogical" monologue of blind trust.

Certainly all theologies have tried to solve these and similar problems by refining both their own answers and the concept of God itself. Our question here, however, is whether an exclusively personal conception of Deity is adequate.

Finally, this God hides himself so well that we can, if we like, deny his existence or act as if he did not exist without any unpleasant consequences. In Chinese sacred music, a single wrong note placed the harmony of the universe in jeopardy, and the threat of death hung over anyone who dared to disturb the "canonical" harmony; in the same way, anyone who in the Christian Middle Ages damaged or destroyed a sacred object, even a picture, was subject to severe penalties, as if the mutilated part were alive. Even a tiny imbalance in the subatomic world, albeit imperceptible to the senses, runs the risk of producing chaos in a large portion of the universe. Is it only God who can be manipulated with impunity? One can well understand that to "save" God, Buddha elected to remain silent, and by doing so he discovered the *other face* of Deity—its apophatic, *kenotic* dimension: the "nonface."

The question, then, is: Is there such a thing as an experience of the divine that is not reduced to interpersonal dialogue? Can one conceive an authentic spirituality in which Deity is not a "thou" for Man, nor his commandment the epitome of all perfection? In short, is the mystery of God exhausted in his unveiling as *Person*?

It is here that Hinduism, like other religions, has something to say. The *Upaniṣads* point to a religious attitude that is not founded on faith in a God-Thou, or a God-will-sovereignty, but in the supra-rational experience of a "Reality" that in some way "inhales" us into itself. The God of the *Upaniṣads* does not speak: he is not Word. He inspires; he is *Spirit*.

In the personalist framework God is not simply the First Principle of things, the cause of Being; he is Someone, he is a Person who calls to himself another person—meets them, so to speak, face-to-face—and is capable of either responding to their love with love or refusing to do so.

A certain framework of the *Upaniṣads* is not centered on a spirituality of call/response or acceptance/refusal. The basic categories here are knowledge and ignorance. The "Absolute" is discovered in its own realization—that is to say, in the experience with which it is reached. The meeting is not situated at the level of dialogue but transcends it. Even the idea of the encounter itself loses its *raison d'être*, since we are transported into the sphere of union.

In its treatment of the various conceptions humans have formed about Deity, the science of religions distinguishes between God-immanent and God-transcendent, which seem at first sight to be in opposition. When we speak of God-transcendent we immediately think of a God who, *from on high*, summons, commands, and directs. We then set such a God against the God-immanent who is *within* us and transforms us by incorporating us into himself.

In practice the modern West very often interprets the idea of transcendence in terms of pure exteriority—God the Other, God on high—and the idea of immanence in terms of pure interiority—a sort of divine presence within the soul, an inner presence that leads in the final analysis to another exteriority, but in the opposite sense. In this conception, the "God within" transcends the human subject no less certainly than the transcendence of the "God without," the only difference being that, instead of situating the *Other* "above," one now conceives him in an "outside" that is called "inside"; this is the inevitable consequence of applying any form of spatial imagery to the mystery of God. Man becomes somehow situated *at the center*: above is transcendence and below immanence.

This conception of transcendence and immanence that makes God-transcendent "exterior" and God-immanent "interior"—the "soul's tenant"—is rather inadequate. It does not account for what mystics of all ages and of all cultural and religious contexts have experienced of the true transcendence and immanence of God.

Divine immanence, strictly speaking, does not refer to a God who is, as it were, enclosed within us, though at the same time irremediably separate from us as he would be in his transcendent or exterior aspect.

Nor can true divine transcendence be reduced to the aspect of exteriority or to that of the "otherness" of God. The authentic notion of transcendence surpasses all human barriers and situates God in the light inaccessible of which St. Paul speaks, in the deep obscurity of the Dionysian mystery-cult; on the other bank of the river, to use a phrase of the *Upaniṣads* and the Buddha—in a word, beyond any "real relation." Transcendence implies heterogeneity between God and Man and rejects any relation that is at the root of all religious anthropomorphism, whether iconolatric or personalist. True divine transcendence cannot belong to the so-called natural and rational order; therefore, if one does not overcome that order, one is unable, in strict terms, either to say or think anything about the "Absolute."

Atheism, which denies all that human reason attempts to say about God, beginning with his existence, is an eloquent spokesman for this divine transcendence. We must add that atheism's critique of the divine mystery, however much it may purge man-made ideas of God, is unable to cloud the diamond purity of absolute transcendence, which is by definition beyond all negation and all affirmation.

Man's transition to divine transcendence and even his discovery of it is only possible if the initiative comes from God's transcendence and is "rooted" in his immanence. Immanence and transcendence are like twin arches inseparable one from the other; one of them

cannot hold without the other. Divine immanence is founded upon divine transcendence and vice versa. We might better still say that the bridge is less between Man and God than between divine immanence and divine transcendence. Man is situated at the very heart of their complementariness or, better, their reciprocal intimacy; in other words, Man reaches both God and his own personal Being by allowing himself to be penetrated by this divine dynamism.

If transcendence is truly transcendence, immanence is not a negative transcendence but a true and irreducible immanence. A God who is only immanent cannot be a God-Person, "someone" with whom I could have a "personal" relationship, a God-Other. I cannot *speak* to an immanent God. If I attempt to do so, I cause the immanence to dissolve by rendering it *other* and *exterior*. I cannot *think* of a God-immanent, for, if I were to try, I would make him the object of my thought and project him before and outside me. The immanent God cannot be someone existing or living in me, as if he were hidden or enclosed within me. Obviously, neither transcendence nor immanence has a spatial nature, nor are they directly related to any ontological category. To say with St. Augustine that God is *intimior intimo meo* (more interior than my inmost being) is still insufficient to express true immanence, because God-immanent cannot be anywhere, beyond or behind, without his immanence vanishing. He is not *intimior*; the most one could say is that he is *intimissimus*. The immanence of God is something quite different from his dwelling in us. God-immanent has no need to rent a space in my soul or wait patiently until I allow him a little corner "within" to move into. The idea that God dwells in the soul is no more than a pale and distant reflection of true immanence. Man is not the innkeeper for an immanent God. The traditional concept of "God" is so linked by usage to the common notion of transcendence outlined above that it is only improperly speaking that the immanent aspect of the divine can be given the name of "God." For example, the name "Creator" attributed to God (to the transcendent God) cannot be predicated of the immanent Deity, for how could it possibly create itself?

The Divine is not only God in the sense of Other, Transcendent, the Person who is beyond and therefore Master, Lord, Creator, Father—all terms that correspond to the ideas of disciple, servant, creature, son—but, according to the terminology of the *Upaniṣads*, it is also at the same time *âtman*, the Self, *aḥam*, I, *brahman*, the ultimate Foundation of everything. In short, *God* and *brahman* are one Mystery seen as it were from two opposed perspectives, *God* being the summit and *brahman* the base of the triangle representing the Deity. They are homeomorphic equivalents, as I have tried to explain elsewhere.

We are thus confronted with the option either to reserve the term "God" to designate the dimension of transcendence, supremacy, and otherness of the Absolute while finding another name like *brahman*, *âtman*, Foundation, or Beginning to signify the dimension of immanence, or to broaden the meaning of the word *God* to include this second dimension as well. The first solution would undoubtedly simplify certain issues. It would clarify, for a start, the dialogue between the so-called monotheistic religions, which rely heavily on the notion of transcendence, and the others, which emphasize more strongly the dimension of immanence. However, such a simplification even within the realm of the "monotheistic" religions would not account for all the richness of their own traditions. One cannot ignore the Sufism of Islam, and still less can one put aside the mystical experiences of Judaism and Christianity.

If tradition were not already too burdened, I should opt for using the words *God* and *Divinity* to signify, respectively, the transcendent and immanent aspects of the divine Reality.

Is it possible to conceive a religion based exclusively on our "relation" with the (immanent) Divinity? I do not think so, for the simple reason that no relationship is conceivable with the Absolute because of its immanence, as I have outlined above. Must we then exclude the dimension of immanence from religion? No, not that either. This dimension of immanence is something like the horizon from which the God of "religions," the living and true God, emerges. And that is precisely what safeguards against his appearing merely as an idol and retreating into anthropomorphism. Is this dimension of immanence not like the bed of a river, hidden and always submerged, like the firm and solid base over which the changing stream of existence flows, like the invisible air that sustains life, like the empty space required for any communication, like the cosmic matrix without which no fecundation could take place?

The unique relation that one can form with *brahman* consists in the breakdown and denial of every supposed relation. The deepest prayer is that of the creature who is unconscious both of who is praying and of the prayer itself. Genuine trust is of those who are conscious of trusting in themselves, in someone else, or indeed in anything at all. Reflection automatically leads to dualism and thus to a cleavage where doubt and mistrust could creep in. In short, only the direct, *ekstatic* attitude, which cannot turn back upon itself or become conscious of itself, allows us to enter into communication, or as we might rather say, *communion*, with the ultimate foundation of all things. This is essentially what the *Māndukya-upaniṣad* calls the "fourth state of consciousness"—*turiya*:

That which is neither internal consciousness  
nor external consciousness, nor both together;  
which does not consist solely in compact consciousness,  
which is neither conscious nor unconscious;  
which is invisible, inaccessible, unnameable,  
whose essence consists in the experience of its own Self;  
which absorbs all diversity,  
is tranquil and benign,  
without a second,  
what they call the fourth state  
—that is *ātman*.

*MandU7*

One can prove—that is to say, demonstrate—the existence of "God" starting from certain premises; one cannot, however, prove the existence of *brahman*. *Brahman* in fact does not *ek-sist*. It is not the Creator, the origin of the *ek-sistential* tension between God and creature; *brahman* has no *ek-sistence* because it possesses no *consistence*. If—for the sake of argument—one succeeded in proving the existence of *brahman*, the result of this demonstration would, by definition, be neither *brahman* nor Divinity. Strictly speaking, "God" cannot be demonstrated either; what can be demonstrated is only the rationality of belief in a supreme Being.

The only way of discovering *brahman* is revelation, in the sense of removing all the veils of *existence*, including that of the *ego*, which belongs to one who undertakes the ascent, or rather the descent, in search of *brahman*. In its path toward the discovery of the ultimate foundation, the *ego* cannot follow the trail to the very end. If it tries, it inevitably disappears; it remains and survives only if it stops along the way. As al-Misrī wrote, referring



to the ascension of Muhammad, "He who retraces his steps does so because he only went halfway along the path. . . ." Only the *āham*, the I, remains absolute, the one without a second, the *ātman*.

It is precisely this unveiling of the Divinity, the ultimate and immanent Foundation of Beings, to which the *Upaniṣads* make their essential witness. Their role in the historical development of human consciousness seems to be bringing to human experience this extraordinary enrichment that contact with the immanent dimension of the Absolute imparts.

Of course, we have no right to ignore the other dimension, and the *Upaniṣads* certainly guard against this. There is no shortage of theistic texts, especially in some of the *Upaniṣads*. Nor should we forget that in the development of the religious consciousness of India they follow and complete the iconolatric and personalistic phase represented by the *Vedas*. A purely immanent spirituality would be even more false than one that was founded only on "transcendence" and that regarded the Absolute only as God, the Other, the Different, and so on. Dualism and monism are equally false.

What we must stress most emphatically, in view of so many inadequate interpretations that are put forward in both the West and the East, is that the central message of the *Upaniṣads* interpreted in its fullness (*sensus plenior*) is neither monism nor dualism, nor indeed the theism that is evident in some of them, but *advaita*, the nondual nature of the Real, the impossibility of adding God to the World or vice versa, the impossibility of putting in *dvandva*—in a pair—God and the world. For the *Upaniṣads* the Absolute is not only transcendent but both transcendent and immanent all in one.

The dimension of transcendence excludes a monistic identification, while that of immanence precludes dualistic differentiation. God and the World are neither one nor two. The fact that they are not two is as evident as the fact that they are not one. If they were one, we could not even properly speak of God *and* the World, since only one thing would actually exist—either God or the World. Monism is a kind of atheism or pantheism. If they were two, God would not be the Absolute, for the common "element," the predicate of both, which includes both God and the World, would be superior to and more comprehensive than either—which contradicts the definition of God as Absolute. It is quite understandable that more than one religion tends to speak only of God or of Gods—but not of the Absolute. God is then the Supreme Entity, but not Being.

Taken in isolation, these two propositions (that God and the World are neither two nor one) do not pose any problem for thought. But it is different when we examine and seek to understand them *together*. Left to itself human reason is inexorably paralyzed when it attempts to resolve this problem. Furthermore, we may make this *a priori* affirmation. If reason were capable by itself of solving the enigma of Reality, it would be, by the very act, unequivocally divine—which would be tantamount to reducing Reality to rationality on the basis that Reality would be transparent (equivalent) to reason. Reason cannot be above the principle of contradiction, but in order to get to the heart of this problem, that is what is needed. It is important to emphasize that this is not to say that the principle of contradiction is invalid or that *advaita* implies its denial. It would be contradictory if one were to say that God and the World are one and two (= not-one) at one and the same time. But what *advaita* maintains is that God and the world *are not* either one thing or two different things—in short, neither one nor two: *an-eka, advaita*.

Is there then another "faculty" that can simultaneously grasp the fact that the truth of these two propositions and their interconnection is neither complementary nor simply reciprocal, but that the truth of each is immanent in the other? *Advaita* (and here practically all forms of mysticism would agree) says that there is such a "faculty" and calls it *anubhava*,

experience, intuition and also grace, faith, gift, revelation, the third eye, the *oculus fidei* of the St. Victor theologians of the twelfth century. When one has seen, felt, and experienced that God is in all, that all is in God and that nevertheless God is nothing of that which is . . . then one is close to realization, to the authentic *advaita* experience, which, like all true experience, cannot be communicated or expressed by words, concepts, or thoughts. The *Gītā*, for example, says in its typically succinct style:

In Me all beings subsist  
but I do not reside in them;  
yet beings do not subsist in Me.  
Contemplate my divine conjunction (*yogam aisvaram*).  
I sustain beings yet I am not in beings;  
it is my ātman it is that causes beings to be.  
IX.4–5

The whole śruti, the Hindū revelation, leads to this point and to this alone: to bring about the realization that ātman is *brahman* (*āyam ātmabrahma*, *MandU* 2), that there is only *I am* (*aham asmi*, *BU* I.4.1), and that my *I* is only a *thou*, as we explain later.

Thus, whereas dialogue, the prayer of praise and petition, along with love and the observance of divine will, are the fundamental religious categories of personalism, the essential attitudes of *advaita* will consist rather in silence, abandonment, total conformity, and absolute nonattachment. *Advaita* spiritually rejects all anthropomorphism. For example, it is incapable of regarding sin as an "offense" against God and it remains insensible to pious considerations such as would arouse compunction or gratitude in the hearts of men by stressing the love that God shows them and what he has done or suffered for them. All this, in the eyes of the *advaitin*, is pure anthropomorphism. To thank "the good Lord" for having created me, for having redeemed me, and other formulations of this kind seem to the *advaitin* the height of egoism, for they imply a reversal of the center of gravity, which thus passes from the Uncreated to the created. Nothing of that sort is compatible with the experience of the Absolute, according to a certain *advaita* spirituality.

Even the values that are recognized by both personalistic and *advaita* spiritualities take on a very different meaning according to whether they are lived out in the climate of the one or the other. In a personalistic spirituality, contemplation consists above all in a more or less direct and loving gaze at the beauty, perfection, and truth of the Other, which leads to a sort of *ecstasy of love*. In *advaita*, on the other hand, contemplation is simply the vision of total Reality where the *ego* as such no longer has any place; it is the experience of the Absolute in its simplicity and its complexity, perfect joy attained in the *in-stasy of union*.

It is impossible adequately to describe a spiritual attitude that is, strictly speaking, ineffable. It has sometimes been called the mystery of being because it is best expressed in terms of "being," but even this notion of being cannot do justice to the *advaita* experience.

The theist has an experience of God as Other precisely because he starts from the subject *ego* as subject of the experience. The *advaitin* reverses the order. The Divinity cannot be described as the Other because there is no subject *ego*—at that level—to have the experience. For the *advaitin* the Divinity is not something in me or outside me; experience is not something that the *ego* has. It is, rather, like a light in which the Real is illuminated and discovered. What the *advaitin* recognizes is not his own *nothingness* that is revealed to him but the Fullness that is unveiled in *itself* (*svayamprakāśā*). There is therefore no place for an *ego* in the *advaitin's* experience. There is no *ego* that can have this experience. The experience

is, and that is all. Any reversion to an *ego* would nullify the *advaita* experience. It is ineffable because there does not exist any *ego* to describe it or witness it.

*Jñānamārga*, the way of knowledge, of pure contemplation, of ontological *theōreia*, is the way par excellence of *advaita*. For the *advaitin* it is not a matter of transforming the world or even himself, as it is with the *karma-yogin*. Neither is it a matter of worshipping God by loving him to the utmost, after the manner of the *bhakta*. It is simply a question of forgetting oneself, of abandoning oneself totally to God, thus renouncing even to love him—a renunciation that does not derive from a lack of love but is, on the contrary and at a deeper level, the sign of a love that is purer and “more extreme,” a love that, having disappeared into the Beloved, no longer has any memory of itself. “Stir not, stir not my love” (Ct 2:7). Of course there is no question here of dualistic knowledge. The *jñāna advaita* has no object and no limits of knowledge. In fact, one cannot know the knower as an object without thereby converting it into a known (BU IV.5.15 and III.4.2). If one knows it, it is only by knowing through it, the knower being in the very knowledge. If the object does not exist, the subject loses its *raison d'être*. However, can the subject know itself without thereby being converted into the object of its own knowledge? Only a trinitarian answer provides the way out of this impasse.

In summary: even though we may go on about the ultimate mystery of Reality, we are Men; as such, and as Protagoras once said, we cannot escape the human dimension, our faithful or unfaithful companion in every adventure, however mystical. Or to reverse Augustine's famous lyrical outburst: *wherever we go we desire to ascend, or, if we want to find refuge, there we not only meet God but we meet ourselves as well.*

In other words, a tripartite anthropology cannot help us sum up this triple form of spirituality.

As *body*, the corporeal dimension does not prevent us completely overlooking an iconolatric spirituality in our journey toward fullness.

As *soul*, we cannot ignore our instincts and impulses, which move us not toward an *amor privatus*, as St. Bernard said (*De diligendo Deo* 12.34), but toward a *dilectio in alterum*, to quote St. Gregory the Great (*In Evangelium* 17.1). Man cannot achieve self-realization without loving—and love co-naturally includes knowledge.

As *spirit* (1 Th 5:23), we realize we are more than knowledge and love, that there is something unutterable and unknowable in us that catapults us toward those shadows from which the voices of virtually all human mystical traditions cry out singing and shouting.

In short, human fullness requires the harmonious development of the three forms of spirituality. Any kind of exclusivity—and, I would add, any superiority claimed by one of them—unbalances and dehumanizes us.

We are saying that the path of the human pilgrimage is a trinary one, and that is what we shall deal with in the pages to come.

## THE TRINITY

One day in Rome during the Vatican Council, some African bishops confided to me their embarrassment at not being able to find in their own languages suitable words to convey the meaning of nature and person: the very concepts were unknown to those tongues. In reply I could only express my admiration for such languages, my regret at not knowing them myself, and my hope that one day they would contribute notably toward the rejuvenation of the central body of dogma of Christianity. However great in point of fact the value of conciliar and dogmatic formulations may be, they make no claim at all to encompass the totality of the divine reality that overflows their limits on all sides to an infinite degree. Furthermore, we must not forget that neither the actual words nor the concepts of nature and person are ever used in the New Testament to express the mystery of the Trinity and also that the first generations of Christians lived out their faith in the Trinity without ever knowing them.

However that may be, my intention here is not to expound the doctrine of the Trinity; my desire is simply to show how in the light of the Trinity the three forms of spirituality described above can be reconciled. It is in actual fact only a trinitarian concept of Reality that permits us at least to indicate the main lines of a synthesis between these three apparently irreducible concepts of the Absolute.

The very popular "modern" tendency to regard all mystery as mysterious (in its secondary meaning of obscure and unfathomable) has played a part in the Trinitarian mystery being relegated more and more to the list of objects and concepts considered virtually useless for a practical Christian life (what is the good, if it is quite incomprehensible?), while in reality the Trinity is not only the theoretical foundation stone of Christianity but also the practical, concrete, and existential basis of the Christian life. This is not to say that the classic interpretation of the Trinity is the only one possible, nor even that it is impossible to transcend in theory the Trinitarian dogma, but in that case one would have to find some comprehensive formulation, which would subsume that which the Trinity now signifies. Christ refers time and again to someone greater than he, to Someone Else still to come; or, to put it another way, Christ has no meaning without a point of reference superior and anterior to himself. Openness in both directions—that is, the pure algebraic expression of Christ as revelation of the Trinitarian mystery, embracing both the human (the "created") and the divine. But without pursuing this line of thought further my aim at present is simply to so enlarge and deepen the mystery of the Trinity that it may embrace this same mystery existent in other religious traditions but differently expressed.

The Trinity, then, may be considered as a junction where the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions meet. The Trinity is God's self-revelation in the fullness of time, the consummation both of all that God has already "said" of himself to Man and of all that Man has been able to attain and know of God in his thought and mystical experience. In

the Trinity a true encounter of religions takes place, which results not in a vague fusion or mutual dilution but in an authentic enhancement of all the religious and even cultural elements that are contained in each.

It is in fact in the Trinity that a true place is found for whatever in religion is not simply the particular deposit of a given age or culture. Only by a deepening of Trinitarian understanding will such an encounter in depth come to pass, the synthesis and mutual fecundation of the different spiritual attitudes that comprise religions, without forcing or doing violence to the fundamental intuitions of the different spiritual paths.

It may be objected: why do I persist, then, in still speaking of the Trinity when, on the one hand, the idea that I give of it goes beyond the traditional idea given by Christianity and, on the other, by linking it closely with one particular religion, I thereby limit its scope, for a religion fits with difficulty into a schema that is not its own?

To this I reply: In the first place, there is, despite the development or deepening that takes place, a very real continuity between the theory of the Trinity that I outline below and Christian doctrine. In the second place, I am convinced that the meeting of religions cannot take place on neutral territory, in a "no-Man's-land" that would be a reversion to unsatisfactory individualism and subjectivism. It can take place only at the very heart of the religious traditions, on the assumption, of course, that they are not immobilized in a complete sclerosis. Third, I am aiming at opening up a possibility of dialogue and am ready to start anywhere, if someone should offer me an adequate point from which to begin. Fourth, it is scarcely possible to speak of these subjects from outside one or another tradition, for it is these very traditions that have determined the terminology. So in selecting one of them, I shall incur no criticism in choosing Christian terminology as my point of departure. As for the results, both our lives and dialogue have an open future before them.

### The Father

Philosophical and theological reasons make me feel uncomfortable with the word "Absolute"; however, accepting a certain traditional language, I will employ the word as its widespread use requires.

The Absolute is One. There is only one God, one Divinity. Between the Absolute or the One, between God or the Divinity, there is no difference or separation: the identity is complete. Briefly, the Absolute embraces everything. By definition, if it were possible, nothing would exist except it.

The Absolute has no name. All religious traditions have recognized that it is in truth beyond every name, "un-namable," *a-nama*, *an-onymos*. The terms that describe it are simply designations that come from Man and are always relative to Man. One can call this Absolute *brahman* or one can call it *tao*. But *tao*, once named, is no longer *tao*; and *brahman*, if known, is no longer *brahman*. The God that is seen is no longer the God (*ho theos*), for no one has ever seen God; "No one can see him and live." His transcendence is constitutive, and he alone is authentically transcendent.

In the Christian tradition this Absolute has a definite designation: "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is he indeed whom Jesus called his Father and God and also taught us to call our Father and God. Yet neither the name Father nor the name God is the proper name of the Absolute. They are simply the names by which we designate him. He is our Father and our God, that is, for us he is Father and God. But independently of us, in himself and for himself, what is He? Ultimately such a question does not even make sense. To ask what the "self" of

God is surely involves an attempt in some way to go beyond his "I": the "divine self" that could utter "I." The phrase "God in himself" already implies a "reflection" that presupposes already this ineffable God (whose "self" we are asking for) and derives from there the notion of a "self" of God that already has an origin and is thus no longer original and originating. God's reflection is no longer the Father; neither our own, nor His own, so to speak.

The Father is the Absolute, the only God, *ho theos*. The Trinity is not a tri-theism. It is very significant that the first Trinitarian formulae do not speak of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Spirit. Neither the Son nor the Spirit is God, but, precisely, the Son of God and the Spirit of God, "equal" to the One God (*ho theos*) as God (*theos*). At this point the inadequacy of the dialectic is clearly shown: neither the plurality nor, consequently, the equality is real; there are not three things that can be equal, or be distinguished. In the Absolute there is no plurality, no multiplicity, nothing which, multiplied or added, could be three: *qui incipit numerari incipit errare* ("He who starts to number starts to err," St. Augustine says). For the same reason there is nothing in the Absolute that could be called equal or unequal. Where, indeed, in the Absolute could a point of reference be found that would permit the denial or affirmation of equality? One cannot say of the Son that he is equal to the Father any more than one can say that he is different. Any norm of measurement comes from outside, and outside the Absolute there is nothing. The same can be said as regards the Spirit. The Nicene Creed, as well as the Greek Fathers and even Tertullian, affirm that the "substratum" of the Divinity resides in the Father. It is only with Augustine that the Divinity as the substratum that imparts unity to the Trinity begins to be considered common to the three persons.

A certain popular theological language that speaks of equality among the "three" persons can certainly be accepted, provided we stop short of accepting an objectified divine nature, "Trinitarianly" disincarnated, as it were (the famous and rejected *quaternitas*). But this stopping to draw logical consequences sounds almost artificial, to say the least. The "three" persons are "equal" because all of them are "God"; but this "God" (whom they are supposed to equal) does not exist and is nothing outside or separated from the divine persons. *Unum est sancta Trinitas, non multiplicatum numero* (One thing [neuter] is the holy Trinity, it has no numerical multiplicity) (Denz.-Schön. 367).

We would like here to approach the Trinitarian mystery in a more direct way, following up the more dynamic thrust of the Greek patristic tradition and the Latin Bonaventurian Scholastic.

Everything that the Father *is* he transmits to the Son. Everything that the Son *receives* he *gives* to the Father in return. This gift (of the Father, in the final analysis) is the Spirit.

Perhaps the deep intuitions of Hinduism and Buddhism, which come from a different universe of discourse than the Greek, may help us to penetrate further the Trinitarian mystery. After all, is not theology precisely the endeavor of the Man of faith to express his religious experience in the mental and cultural context in which he is situated?

If the Father begets the Son (and this is a total generation since the Father gives himself fully to the Son), that means that what the Son is, is the Father, that is, the Son is the *is* of the Father. In the formula of identity "A is B" or "F is S," what F is, is S. F, qua F, separately, in itself, is not F. S is what F is. To the question: what is F? We must reply: it is S. To know the Son qua Son is to realize the Father also; to know Being as such implies to have transcended it in a non-ontical way, it means to know it as *Esse*, not *ens*. And, if this knowledge is perfect, it leads to be what has been known. This "Being" is the Son.

Using other terms, we may say: the Absolute, the Father, *is not*. He has no *ex-istence*, not even that of Being. In the generation of the Son he has, so to speak, given everything.

In the Father the apophatism (the *kenōsis* or emptying) of Being is real and total. This is what elsewhere I have called "the Cross in the Trinity," that is, the integral immolation of God (Father), of which the Cross of Christ and his immolation are only the images and revelations. When the Absolute gives itself, it ceases to be absolute, it disappears; it gives itself absolutely.

Nothing can be said of the Father "in himself," of the "self" of the Father, because such a "self" does not exist; otherwise, he would not be the Father! Certainly he is the Father of the Son and Jesus addresses him as Father, but even "Father" is not his proper name, though he has no other. In begetting the Son he gives up everything, even, if we may dare to say so, the possibility of Being expressed in a name that would speak of him and him alone, outside any reference to the generation of the Son. Is it not here, truly speaking, in this essential apophatism of the "person" of the Father, in this *kenōsis* of Being at its very source, that the Buddhist experience of *nirvāṇa* and *śūnyatā* (emptiness) should be situated? One is led onward toward the "absolute goal" and at the end one finds nothing, because there is nothing, not even Being. "God created out of nothing" (*ex nihilo*); certainly—a Hindū would add—out of nothing except himself (i.e., *a Deo*, that is not the same as *ex Deo*). He sacrificed his own "self" in the Son, by begetting the Son.

*Brahman* is not, at this point the *Upaniṣads* contribute, certainly self-consciousness (which is the *ātman* realized). What the Father knows is the Son, but the expression is ambiguous, since the Son is not the accusative, the object of the Father's knowledge. He could then not be a person, and even less be "equal" to the Father. Instead of saying, "What, whom [*quod, quem*, in the accusative] the Father knows is the Son," it would almost be better to say, despite the violence done to the grammar, "Who [*quod, quis* in the nominative] the Father knows is the Son." The Son is not an object; he is the knowledge of the Father, since he is the Being of the Father. The "identity" is total and the "alterity" is equally total, infinite, and absolute: *alius non aliud*, as the Scholastics used to say.

One goes to the Father only through the Son. To go directly to the Father does not even make sense. If one tried to do so, one would find that this so-called way to the Father is non-way, non-thought, non-Being. Even the Son only knows the Father in Being known by him: "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"; *Aham asmi, Ego eimi ho on*, "I am who I am." Creation is the echo of that divine primordial cry.

Any attempt to speak about the Father involves almost a contradiction in terms, for every word about the Father can only refer to the one of whom the Father is Father, that is, to the Word, to the Son. It is necessary to be silent. The most diverse religious traditions teach us that God is Silence. This affirmation must be accepted in its unfathomable profundity. God is Silence total and absolute, the silence of Being and not only the Being of silence. His word, who completely expresses and consumes him, is the Son. The Father has no Being; the Son is his Being. The source of Being is not Being. If it were, how could it be its source? *Fons et origo totius divinitatis* (source and origin of the whole divinity), said one of the Councils of Toledo (Denz.-Schön. 528, etc.).

In just the same way the idea suggested above that the Father is the unique and absolute I is inadequate and relative. The self-affirmation "I" can only be made with reference to a Thou, a Thou who in its turn can only arise because there is a "he." The Father *quoad se* in himself is not even an I: he affirms himself only through the Son in the Spirit. He does not affirm himself, he affirms. Properly speaking, no statement about the Trinity is true if taken in isolation from the other equally constitutive relations. *Nec recte dici potest, ut in uno Deo sit Trinitas, sed unus Deus Trinitas*, as the above-mentioned Council underscores: *Quod enim Pater est, non ad se, sed ad Filium est* (Nor can it be correctly said that in one God there is a

trinity, but there is one God-Trinity [and it adds]: What the Father is, He is not for himself, but for the Son).

However, there exists in us a dimension, the deepest of all, that corresponds to this total apophatism. Not only does everything go to him but everything also comes from him, the Father of Lights. Undoubtedly one cannot reach him any more than a meteor can reach the sun without being volatilized and thus disappearing before getting there; but it is equally impossible to avoid being carried along in the current that draws everything toward him, the Father. One can be united with the Son or one may be in the Spirit but one can never be the Father, because the Father is not. One can never reach him because there is no "end" to attain. And yet all things tend to him as their ultimate goal. The impossibility of reaching the Father is thus not an ontical, but a metaontical impossibility.

Devotion to the Father meets an apophatism of Being; it is a movement toward . . . no place, a prayer that is always open toward the infinite horizon, which, like a mirage, always appears in the distance because it is no-where. The image, the icon, exists: the *Logos*. Being is only an image, a revelation of that which, if it were completely unveiled, would not even be, for Being is its manifestation, its epiphany, its symbol. "The Son is his name," says the gnostic *Evangelium Veritatis*, written out of a Judeo-Christian milieu. "The Son is the visibility of the invisible," St. Irenaeus repeats.

"No one can come to me, if the Father who sent me does not draw him." If we consider this statement in the light of what has just been said, it appears so evident that we could even take it for a tautology. How, indeed, could one reach the Son without participating in his sonship? But that sonship is real only because the Father causes it to emerge as such. It is, so to say, the reverse of paternity. If I go to the Son it is because I already participate in his sonship; in other words, because the Father has already included me in the sonship of his Son.

"He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9) is another *mahāvākya* (great utterance) of the theology of the Father. Whoever sees Christ sees the Father because the Son is the Father made visible, because there is nothing else to see of the Father except the result of his paternity, namely, the Son. But to see the Son is to see him as Son of the Father and thus to see the Father in or rather through the Son (and not in himself since he is nothing). There are not two visions or seings, one for the Son and another for the Father: whoever sees *me* in the see-ing of this *me* sees the *ego* that engenders it and gives it being. Strictly speaking one does not see the Son outside the Father nor the Father outside the Son. There are not two visions but one: *Semel locutus est Deus, duo haec audiui* (One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard) (Ps 61:12).

"He who has seen me . . .": only the Spirit can have such a "vision" and with him those who live in the Spirit participate in this vision of the Father-Son. No-one goes to the Father except through the Son and neither can anyone recognize the Son except in the Spirit.

Properly speaking, the spirituality of the Father is not even a spirituality. It is like the invisible bedrock, the gentle inspirer, the unnoticed force that sustains, draws, and pushes us. God is truly transcendent, infinite. The moment that one stops, takes a stand, objectivizes, and "manipulates" religion, faith, and God, one destroys, so to speak, this ultimate ground of all things, which in itself is quite "ungraspable": one can recognize it as one's support. If hatred (lack of love) is the sin against the Son, and blindness (denial of faith) the sin against the Spirit, despair (refusal to hope, being stubbornly shut up in the finite and limited) is the sin against the Father. The first can be pardoned. The second—well, it cannot be pardoned because one cannot ask forgiveness for it (as long as the sin remains). But the third is non-pardon itself, the sin against pardon (since all forgiveness is boundless), the very contradiction of pardon. It is the sin of not wanting, not even being able to be pardoned. In other



words, the sin against the Father is the break with the infinite, the denial of our divinization, self-damnation in the finite, the closed, and the limited: hell. Despair is the refusal of the infinite and suffocation in the finite. . . . But Man as far as he lives in time and space is not capable of absolute despair.

### The Son

It is the Son who is, and so *is* God. He is certainly God-from God and Light-from Light, but unless we proceed *ad infinitum* (and thus *ad absurdum* making God emerge from another Supergod and so on) we will have to say that the Father from which the *God-from* comes is properly speaking the Source of-God. This *of-God* is precisely the Son. It is the Son who acts, who creates. Through him everything was made. In him everything exists. He is the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega. It is the Son, properly speaking—and the Son was manifested in Christ—who is the Divine Person, the Lord. According to the most traditional theology the term Person cannot be used in the Trinity as a real analogy. *Pluraliter praedicatur de tribus* (The Three are predicated of in the plural), says St. Thomas, referring to the divine persons (*Sum. Theol.* I, q.39, a.3, ad 4). "*Persona [in divinis] non est essentia nec natura, sed personalitas*" (Person [in God] is neither essence nor nature, *sed personalitas*), meaning that the three persons are not three Gods.

Analogy exists between the Creator and his creatures (see, e.g., *Sum. Theol.* I, q.13, a.5; q. 29, a.4, ad 4), but not within the Trinity itself. "Person" is not a "universal" (see *Sum. Theol.* I, q.30, a.4, for the *communitas negationis, intentionis, rationis et rei*). Or in the intriguing words of Duns Scotus: *ad personalitatem requiritur ultima solitudo* ("The *personalitas* [to be a person] requires an ultimate loneliness" [*Ordinatio* III, d.I, q.I, n.17]). That which makes Man a person is radical solitariness. An analogy always presupposes some foundation of the analogy (*a secundum quid unum*), entity, or idea as the first point of reference, which in this case cannot exist outside the divine persons, for this would imply either a fourth ultimate principle or mere modalism if the difference between the persons were only in our mind; nor can it exist inside the divine persons, for this would imply real diversity and difference among them—always, of course, under the traditional assumption of considering persons as separate individuals. Thus, strictly speaking, it is not true that God is *three* Persons. "Person" here is an equivocal term which has a different meaning in each case. Once the revelation of the living Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is received, it is already an abstraction to speak of "God." Divine "nature," God, as a monolithic entity does not exist. There is no God except the Father who is his Son through his Spirit—but without three *whos* or *whats* of any sort. The word "God" used of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at once, is a *generic* name and therefore without concrete univocal content. There is not a *quaternitas*, a God-divine nature, outside, inside, above, or beside the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Only the Trinity is Person, if we use the word in its eminent sense and analogically to human persons. None of the divine "persons" is a Person. There is no real analogous factor (*quid analogatum*) common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For want of a better term one could certainly call them "persons" in so far as they are real relative oppositions at the heart of the divine mystery, but one must beware of "substantializing" them or considering them "in themselves." A person is never in himself, but by the very fact that he is a person is always a constitutive relation, a *pros ti*. The above-mentioned Council affirmed that "there cannot be any plural in the three persons" (Denz.-Schön. 530).

Correctly speaking, then, it is only with the Son that Man can have a personal relationship. "God is not person but in Christ," wrote Jakob Böhme. The God of theism, thus, is

the Son; the God with whom one can speak, establish a dialogue, enter into communication, is the divine Person who is in-relation-with, or rather, is the relationship with Man and one of the poles of total existence. "The name of God and Father, which is essentially subsistent, is his *Logos*," says Maximus the Confessor (*Expo. orat. domin.* [PG 90.871]). Or as the Greek tradition liked to repeat with Dyonisius the Areopagite: God is "neither triad nor monad."

Now this God, the Son, is in Trinitarian terminology the Mystery hidden since the world began, the Mystery of which the Scriptures speak, and which, according to Christians, was manifested in Christ.

Here we must make a preliminary observation. Christ is an ambiguous term. It can be the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, or it may be the name given to Jesus of Nazareth. One may identify it with the *Logos* and thus with the Son or equate it with Jesus. The nomenclature that I personally suggest in this connection is as follows: I would propose using the word *Lord* for that Principle, Being, *Logos*, or Christ that other religious traditions call by a variety of names and to which they attach a wide range of ideas. I am not making any claim here to solve the problem, and shall thus continue to use the name of Christ, for I believe it is important that the figure of Christ should regain its complete fullness of meaning, but I shall do so in a way that is devoid either of polemic or apologetic. Each time that I speak of Christ I am referring (unless it is explicitly stated otherwise) to the Anointed One of whom Christians can lay claim to no monopoly. It is Christ, then, known or unknown, who makes religion possible. Only in the Anointment is there *religatio*. Christ, manifest or hidden, is the unique link between the created and the uncreated, the relative and the absolute, the temporal and the eternal, earth and heaven—Christ is the only mediator. Between these two poles everything that functions as mediator, link, "conveyor," is Christ, the sole priest of the cosmic priesthood, the Anointment par excellence.

When I call this link between the finite and the infinite "the infinite" and "Christ," I am not presupposing its identification with Jesus of Nazareth. Even from right within the Christian faith such an unqualified identification has never been asserted. What the Christian faith does affirm is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, namely, that he has a special and unique relationship with what Paul, following Old Testament usage, calls the Uncreated Wisdom, what John following Philo calls the *Logos*, what Matthew and Luke following Judaism consider in intimate relation with the Holy Spirit, and what later tradition has agreed in calling the Son.

My task here is not to discuss the other names and titles that have been accorded to this manifestation of the Mystery in other religious traditions. The reason I persist in calling it Christ is that it seems to me that phenomenologically Christ presents the fundamental characteristics of the mediator between divine and cosmic, eternal and temporal, and so on, that other religions call *Išvara*, *Tathāgata*, or other names. It is not without a deep and prophetic intuition that much of neo-Hindū spirituality speaks in this way of "Christic awareness."

Personalism is not wrong in asserting that personal relationship is essential to every evolved religious attitude and that the discovery or re-velation of the God-person is a decisive contribution of Christianity. However, this affirmation needs to be completed by a recollection of the fact that the Father is "greater" than the Son and that only in the Spirit is this interpersonal communion realized and in a dialogue on an equal footing between *me*, Man, and *him*, God.

The Son is the mediator, the *summus pontifex* (High Priest) of creation and also of the redemption and glorification, or transformation, of the world. Beings *are*, in so far as they participate in the Son, *are from, with, and through* him. Every Being is a *Christophany*—a showing forth of Christ.

If anthropomorphism is false, it is not at all because it assumes the human, but because it neglects the divine. That is to say, it is false in so far as it remains on this side of an authentic cosmotheandricism, completely divine and completely human at the same time, the end and fullness of all religion.

World religions, for their part, have not always paid enough attention to this dazzling, almost blinding revelation of the fullness of the divine mystery. They have thus preserved in their experience of the Absolute a sort of trinitarian indiscrimination. But is it not precisely this that has allowed them to maintain sometimes a perhaps more satisfactory equilibrium between these three essential dimensions of every spirituality that we have described above and that we may sum up as apophatism, personalism, and divine immanence? Be that as it may, it is in the trinitarian possibilities of the world religions, in the striving of each in its own fashion toward the synthesis of these spiritual attitudes, that the meeting of religions—the *kairos* of our time—finds its deepest inspiration and most certain hope. The spiritual evolution of humanity is today passing through a particularly important stage, and we have every reason to expect from it, as a result of the mutual fecundation of religions and of the experiences that undergird them, a fuller integration into human religious consciousness of the experience of the mystery and the life of the Trinity, and, by this, a reintegration of Man, letting him accomplish the task that belongs to him in the adventure of Reality.

An analogy taken from the inner development of Christian spirituality will perhaps help us to grasp more fully the import of this *kairos*. At the very center of Christianity we discover an evolutionary process that could be described as the changeover from a *monodimensional supranaturalism* to a *supernatural naturalism*, which elsewhere I called *sacred secularity*.

The impact on Men of the message of the gospel was such that, in the early days of the church, the only person considered a "perfect Christian" was one who had already reached the *eschaton* (the end), that is to say, the martyr; or, in default of him, his substitute in the temporal sphere, the monk, the Man who had passed beyond time, and who had renounced totally the world and all its works. It is very interesting here to observe that monastic asceticism, which in India gushed forth like an irresistible torrent as a result of the inner experience of the mystery of Being, came into existence equally spontaneously in the West as a result of the eschatological experience in Christian faith. Little by little, however—due not to the relaxation of the Christian ideal, as some "a-cosmics" will claim, but far more to a progressively growing awareness of and openness to the community of mankind, the world, nature, and history—the Christian, under the impulse of the Spirit guiding within, became more and more conscious of the necessity of penetrating to the very depth of both cosmic and human structures. He realized that it was his task to provide the leaven of which the gospel speaks, to modify and transform them and thus to bring them at last to their perfect fulfillment in Christ at the risk, certainly (not always overcome) of allowing himself to be swept away by the passing "world." Despite the great dangers and the number of those who succumb, the responsible Christian who is sensitive to the movement of the "wind" blowing from on high turns himself more and more in our day toward the world, toward an expansion of his life in the direction of others and the universe at large.

It would appear that there is nowadays a progressive abandonment not only of the life of the hermit or "desert" but, equally, of the conventual life and the cloister, even of those more recent and more open forms of the classic religious life that developed during the last century. More than this, we can detect a thrust, as it were, of the Spirit pushing the Christian forward beyond what we call "Christianity," even beyond the institutional and visible church. His ever more vivid awareness of the irresistible movement of all things toward the *apokatastasis*, the restoration, of all in Christ, no longer permits him to confine himself by

any barrier whatever at any level of thought or society or institutional life, but rather impels him in the Spirit to immerse himself at the deepest level in all endeavors related to Man and this universe, just like the yeast that leavens the lump, the light that drives away shadows, and the victim whose immolation saves and purifies all things.

Personal and special vocations will surely continue, and nothing must be lost of all that the church has garnered in the course of the centuries. Yet every vocation is of necessity a limited one, and in a truly Christian spirituality there is room for the most diverse vocations; but it is of vital importance that false a-cosmism should disappear, the acosmism that consists in shutting oneself up in a mental or institutional structure that, being the product of history, is destined by this very fact to be superseded in its turn by history. The signs of the times—and through them, the Spirit who reveals himself in them—invite us to open wide the doors of *oikouménê*, to break down the walls (of protection once upon a time, but nowadays of separation) of the so-called Christian city and to advance to meet all Men with outstretched arms. They no longer permit a man to remain at the particularistic and limited, perhaps even sectarian and exclusive, level of his own "individual" experience of Christ, for the only true experience of Christ is in human and cosmic *koinonía*. Furthermore, the experience of Christ and the spirituality that springs from it must expand in faith right up to their full Trinitarian dimensions; nothing could be more in accordance with the teaching and example of the One who came to the world solely to witness to the Father, to accomplish not his own will but that of his Father who sent him—of the One who, at the moment of his death, explained to his disciples that it was well for them if he went away, because otherwise the Holy Spirit, the teacher of all truth, would not come. If we remain attached exclusively to the "Savior," to his humanity and his historicity, we block, in a manner of speaking, the coming of the Spirit and thus revert to a stage of exclusive iconolatry. It should be clear that when we say "church," we do not refer to the history of the churches, but to that aspect of the universe that the Christian tradition, confirmed by Vatican Council II, called *sacramentum mundi*, the "mystery of cosmos."

Besides, these signs of the times are not only to be observed in Christianity. Throughout the world, in fact, we are witnessing the same process at work. World religions are "secularizing"; new religions or quasi-religions, which aspire to embrace both the sacred and the profane, are springing up on all sides, while movements that claim to be a-religious are themselves becoming more and more sacralized. And the Son, the Anointed One under whatever name, is the symbol for this process.

### The Spirit

The revelation of the Father is the revelation of God transcendent, of such a transcendence that, strictly speaking, even the name of God cannot be attributed to him. Thus, for us, pilgrims as we are in space and time, it is the *Logos* that is God. The revelation of the Spirit, on the other hand, is the revelation of God immanent. As was explained above, the divine immanence is not simply a negative transcendence; it is quite a different thing from the divine welling in the depths of the soul. Essentially it signifies the ultimate inner-ness of every Being, the final foundation, the *Ground of Being* as well as of Beings.

Properly speaking, the concept of revelation can be applied only to the Son. Transcendence as such cannot reveal itself—nor, similarly, can it be incarnated, which amounts to the same thing—since that which reveals itself is no longer transcendence but the revelation of it—that is, God, the Son, the *Logos*, the Icon. Transcendence needs to reveal itself in order to manifest itself, to make itself known, but for that precise reason when it manifests itself

it ceases to be transcendence and becomes revelation, the manifestation of the transcendent. In a way that is analogous, revelation of immanence has no meaning at all, strictly speaking, for if immanence is to reveal itself, that implies that it is not immanent but underlying (since it had to be revealed). Transcendence ceases to be when it reveals itself: immanence is incapable of revealing itself, for that would be a pure contradiction of terms; an immanence that needs to manifest itself, to reveal itself, is no longer immanent. Hence the extreme difficulty of using all these categories outside their own terms of reference. Therefore I am choosing here the language appropriate to meditation, such as springs from the intelligence by a contemplative affinity.

Divine immanence is first of all a *divine* immanence: God is immanent to himself, and it is only God who can be immanent to himself. Divine immutability is something quite different from static immobility. Doubtless God does not move as creatures do, but he is not immobile as they are either. That is why in the bottomless ocean of the Divinity there is a sort of constant deepening, of permanent "interiorization." It is the experience of the Trinitarian mystery that shows us that in reality God is immanent to himself, that there is in him a sort of bottomless interiority, infinitely interior to itself.

When one seeks to penetrate the innermost mystery of a Being, piercing its surface and going always deeper, one passes one after another successive levels of the within-ness of this being to itself. Finally there comes a moment when it seems that one has passed and left behind the very specificity of this being, its "self." Then (if it is permitted thus to symbolize this experience), one only meets—for there no longer exists anything else—on the one hand God and, on the other, *nothing*, nothingness. If now one uses the same metaphor when one seeks to plumb the final secret of God, one finds that at the deepest level of the Divinity, what there is is the Spirit. To continue speaking in images—only dangerous when one stops with them—could one not say that in spite of every "effort" of the Father to "empty himself" in the generation of the Son, to pass entirely into his Son, to give him everything that he *has*, everything that he *is*, even then there remains in this first procession, like an irreducible factor, the Spirit, the non-exhaustion of the source in the generation of the *Logos*? For the Father the Spirit is, as it were, the return to the source that he is himself. In other, equally inappropriate, words: the Father can "go on" begetting the Son, because he "receives back" the very Divinity that he has given up to the Son. It is the immolation or the mystery of the cross in the Trinity. It is what Christian theologians used to call the *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, the dynamic inner circularity of the Trinity.

It must be said immediately, moreover, that this divine immanence of the Father, which is the Spirit, is equally the divine immanence of the Son. The Spirit is the communion between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is immanent to Father and Son jointly. In some manner the Spirit "passes" from Father to Son and from Son to Father in the same process. Just as the Father holds nothing back in his communication of himself to the Son, so the Son does not keep to himself anything that the Father has given him. There is nothing that he does not return to the Father. Thus the Trinitarian cycle is completed and consummated, though in no way is it a "closed cycle." The Trinity is, indeed, the real mystery of Unity, for true unity is Trinitarian. For that reason, properly speaking, there is no Self in the reflexive sense. The Self of the Father is the Son, his *in-himself* is the Spirit. But the Son has no Self; he is the Thou of the Father; his *Self* in relation to his Father is a Thou. Similarly with the Spirit; the Spirit "in himself" is a contradiction. There is only the Spirit of God, of the Father and Son. He is the One sent. He is neither an I who speaks to another, nor a Thou to whom someone else speaks, but rather the *we* between the Father and the Son—that *we* which encompasses also the whole universe in a peculiar way. Strictly speaking one cannot even say that the Father

is an I, if one takes it to be a sort of "absolute subject." The Son is assuredly the Thou of the Father. Furthermore, the Son is the *Logos*, the Word. The speaker (the Father) is known only in the Word. He is nothing outside this speaking, which is his Son. This is why in relation to us the divine I appears only in the *thou* of the *Logos* through the *we* of the Spirit. There is no room for egoism in the Trinity. It has no *Ding an sich*, selfhood as such.

The themes upon which we are now touching are, without doubt, most delicate ones, which no one has the right to approach without reverent awe, deep humility, and a sincere respect for tradition. Yet is it not precisely this respect for tradition, this awe and humility that oblige us to bring all our faith to bear upon an examination of them? If we take seriously the apophatism of the Father, we are able only to say that the Son is the Thou of the Father, without even being able to add that the Father is *an* I. He is an I who is totally out-spoken, that saying all that he is in his ward, there is nothing left in him. This is why in relation to us it is the self-same *Logos* that appears to us as the divine I.

The Trinity is neither modalistic nor tri-substantial (tri-theistic). We must always bear in mind that modalism is very difficult to avoid, when, in an attempt to explain the Trinitarian mystery, one starts with the idea of Being, thus identifying by a single equation Being and God. If in fact there is a single God, there can only be a single Being, and since in that case the three Persons cannot be three beings, there is no alternative other than for them to be "three" participants in Being, a Being that shares itself in *three* "perspectives" internal to its very Being. But in this case either the "perspectives" are real and thus each of them does not comprise the whole of Being (which would deny the Divinity of each of the three Persons), or they are not real and then modalism again creeps in (for in that case the Persons are only different modes of Being itself).

The traditional answer to this problem is that the Persons are subsisting relations, which is the same as saying that Being is relation, both to the interior of itself and to what is exterior, with the result that beings are only relational games. Viewed from this angle what becomes of the notion of substance? Granted, in God there are not three substances but three persons. However, what is divine substance? Is there *one* divine substance? It could not in actual fact exist outside Persons. It cannot be considered as a thing, a common *sub-stance* in which the persons *participate*, since each person cannot form *part* only of whatever that would be, as personal divinity is complete.

The *advaita*, which helps us express suitably the "relation" God-World, is again a precious aid in elucidating the intra-Trinitarian problem. If the Father and the Son are not *two*, they are not one either: the Spirit both unites and distinguishes them. He is the bond of unity; the *we* in between, or rather within.

The Father has no name because he is beyond every name, even the name of Being. The Spirit has and can have no name either because he is a certain way on this side of every name, even that of Being. Being and beings—and hence all existence—belong to the kingdom and sphere of the Son. If, as the Council of Toledo says, the Father is *fons et origo totius divinitatis*, source and origin of the whole divinity, if the Son *is* God and, as the Greek Fathers say, developing the image, the River who flows from the Source, then the Spirit is, as it were, the End, the limitless Ocean where the flux of divine life is completed, rests, and is consummated (*plenitudo et pelagus totius divinitatis*). So long as the Spirit has not been received, it is impossible to understand the message brought by the Son and, equally, to reach *theosis*, the divinization that the Spirit realizes in man. There is no doubt that Hindū thought is especially well prepared to contribute to the elaboration of a deeper theology of the Spirit. Indeed, is not one of its fundamental urges precisely this, to rise and strive toward the discovery and realization of the Spirit?

One cannot have "personal relations" with the Spirit. One cannot reach the Transcendent, the Other, when one is directed toward the Spirit. One cannot pray to the Spirit as an isolated term of our prayer. One can only have a nonrelational union with him. One can only pray in the Spirit, by addressing the Father through the Son. It is rather the Spirit who prays in us. When one embarks on the way of the Spirit, one can only reach the extraontic foundation of everything. But the foundation of Being is no longer Being. The contemplation in/into the Spirit has no intellectual content.

It is to this Spirit that most of the Upanishadic assertions about the Absolute point, when seen in their own deepest light. One could cite almost every page of the Upanishads for examples. Indeed, what is the Spirit but the *âtman* of the *Upaniṣads*, which is said to be identical with *brahman*, although this identity can only be existentially recognized and affirmed once "realization" has been attained? "In the beginning was the *Logos*," the New Testament affirms. "At the end will be the *âtman*," adds the wisdom of this cosmic Testament to the canon that is not yet closed. The end of every individual is the recognition that this *âtman* is identical with *brahman*. Man finds himself, as it were, under the arc that stretches between the transcendent God and the immanent Divinity. The Mediator (unknown by his name) is the one who unites by the "supreme bridge" (*pontifex maximus*) *âtman* and *Brahman*. One could translate in this way a well-known Sanskrit verse: "He who knows that *brahman* exists—his is an indirect knowledge; he who knows, 'I am *brahman*'—his is a direct knowledge." "I am *brahman*" is so far as it is not *brahman* who says so. The one who can speak thus does it only as the Spirit and the Word who is thus spoken is the *Logos*.

The spirituality of the Spirit is quite different from that of the Word. One attains the Spirit neither by word nor by action. Faith in the Spirit cannot be clothed in personalist structures. It does not consist in the discovery of Someone, and even less in dialogue with him. It consists rather in the "consciousness" that one is not found outside reality, in the "realization" that one is, so to speak, included in it, that one is already there, that one is (if we prefer to put it this way) known to and loved by it—better still, that one is as though enveloped, submerged in knowledge and love, in the beauty that one has with joy penetrated. It is a kind of total passivity: there is no longer any me to save, for one has grasped that there is an I who calls one by a new and completely hidden name. The spirituality of the Spirit shows us in the mystery the horizon on which the I emerges—an I that is not at all the Spirit, but that is the Father through the Son. Only the spirituality of the Spirit makes this discovery possible, and for this very reason the "name" is always new and hidden. Its only way is the way of silence—the silence of words, no doubt, but also that of desires, that of action, the silence, finally, of being, of wishing to be, the total silence of the will to be—because it is neither through flesh nor blood nor the will of Man that one becomes what one is (what one will be, for one who is situated on the temporal plane). Faith in the Spirit cannot be formulated; it too is silent.

Life according to the Spirit is authentic existence. This is why, until the end has arrived, it cannot be lived in a total way. It needs to be complemented by the other spiritualities, especially that of the Incarnation. This complementarity does not mean that the ways of the Word and of the Spirit are not complete in themselves but demonstrates the fact that temporal human existence is conditioned by the lack of unity between the way of the Word and that of the Spirit. The function of a perfectly balanced spirituality is precisely to integrate the one with the other. The way of the Spirit, indeed, without its Trinitarian integration carries a certain risk of disincarnation. One does not, however, have the right to treat the negative or apophatic way that is constitutive of the spirituality of the Spirit as disincarnation or "spiritualism." Since the Spirit is sanctifier and purifier, the way of the Spirit can only be spoliation and negation of all that is not yet. It is necessary constantly to deny everything *creaturely* in

order to accomplish the transformation. The Upanishadic expression of this spirituality is *neti neti*. One must not be afraid of negation. Everything that can be negated is still, by that very fact, mere potentiality of Being and consequently *is not*. Being, which really *is*, cannot be negated—any more than the principle of contradiction can be contradicted, without a prior supposition. It is possible to deny Being but not to negate it, destroy it, injure it in any way. Suicide is only possible for the mortal, but Being is immortality. The fear of total negation of self (as demanded by all true asceticism—which negation can only be realized in and through the Spirit) is clear proof that this self that is afraid is not the real and authentic thou. The only one who seeks to “be a man” is one who is not, the adolescent, for example, or the vain. He who is really a man does not concern himself with *appearing so*. One may as well hasten to disencumber oneself of that which one is afraid to lose. This very fear is the sign of the nonvalue of what one is afraid to lose. “Life” that can be lost is not Life. Nor is existence that can be lost real existence. To relinquish all his “substance” for the sake of love (which is stronger than death) is a mere trifle for the one who truly loves. True asceticism begins by eliminating the fear of losing what can be lost. The ascetic is the one who has no fear.

It is the Spirit, which situates us in the only true perspective, altering all those perspectives from which, by reason of our creaturely and, moreover, fallen condition, we are accustomed to view things. Only in the Spirit is true *metanoia*, conversion, return, change of *noûs* (mind) and *gnosis* (knowledge). It is not only our moral “values” that the Spirit alters, not only our natural vision of things that it transforms, but it also renews in us “religion” and spirituality. The Spirit comes only after the cross, after death. It works in us the resurrection and causes us to *pass* to the other shore. We say “shore” instead of “world,” since any shore is such because there is the other shore.

The inversion that the Spirit brings about is total. The wisdom of this world becomes folly and the mystery of the Cross the true wisdom. The Spirit leads Man to realize that he is not an I (*ego*) but a thou (*tu*); that he is only in so far as the one I (*ego*, *aham*) says to him *thou*:

“I have called thee in justice” (Is 42:6):

- never in the nominative, which is not even possible; but
- in the vocative, to give you your very being, which is being called (to existence): “Thou art my Son; today I have begotten thee” (Ps 2:7);
- in the accusative, for he calls you to an intimate relationship: “I have called thee” (Is 42:6);
- in the dative, for he entrusts to you the task of gathering all Men into community: “I have given to thee the peoples” (Ps 2:8); and completes in you the universe: “I have purposed you for a light to the nations and a bond of union to the peoples” (Is 42:6 and 49:6); and finally
- in the ablative, for he uses you as an instrument for the service of the world and the completion of creation: “to open the eyes of the blind” (Is 42:7).

It is the Spirit who gives an understanding of the Scriptures.

The Spirit, for example, causes us to understand that, when it is written for our dull ears and stony hearts that “the Word was made flesh,” it is in reality the flesh which is made Word—for the descent of God, as St. Thomas would say, cannot be real, whereas on the contrary our own ascent to divinity can be absolutely real. This is true, moreover, not only for us but also for the Word, about whom one cannot with any truth assert that having passed in tranquillity and repose innumerable eons of time in his heaven he decided one fine day to “descend” here below. The real truth is that he—sole begotten of the Father—was a *principio*



*aeternitatis*, the firstborn of Creation, the first Principle of all things even before the foundation of the world, the Lamb immolated since the origin of time. For what in very truth is Creation if not an invitation to enter into the mystery of God through Christ in the Spirit?

In so far as Man has not had the experience, in one way or another, of Being a Thou spoken by God, in so far as he has not discovered with the wonder of a child (because it is full of mystery) that he is precisely because the I calls him (and calls him by his name, the name representing here his self-hood, his being) he has not yet reached the depth of life in the Spirit. The Spirit causes us to cry *Abba*, Father, because in the last analysis there is only a Thou of the Father, which is the Son. The Father calls us with the same "calling" with which he calls his Son. In God there is no multiplicity. There cannot be two "callings" nor two "words" in God. We are only in so far as we *participate* in the *Logos*. Every being is, and is only, a *Christophany*.

The Augustinian "psychological" conception of the Trinity is well known: we *are*, we *know*, we *will* (or *love*): I *am* knowing and loving, I *know* myself as being and loving, I *want* to be and to know (see *Conf. XIII.11*)—an inspired conception, most certainly, and one that enables us to approach the divine mystery by taking as our starting-point man, the image of the Trinity in the innermost and truest part of his Being. Yet in spite of its validity, its anthropocentricity is very obvious: the Father, Being; the Son, Intellect; the Spirit, Love; *mens, notitia, amor*, or also *memoria, intelligentia, voluntas*.

Now what we would venture to suggest—with the gospel in hand and at heart—is the Father, Source, the Son, Being, the *Thou*; and the Spirit, Return to Being (or Ocean of Being), the *we*. Paul's Trinitarian formulation of God "*above all, through all and in all*" (Eph 4:6) gives us the clue:

*Epi panton*—over all, *super omnes*, the Source of Being, which is not Being, since, if so, it would be Being and not its source: the ultimate I.

*Dia panton*—through all, *per omnia*, the Son, Being and the Christ, he through whom and for whom everything was made, beings being participants in Being: the *Thou*—still scattered in the many *thous* of the universe.

*En pāsin*—within all, *in omnibus*, the Spirit, divine immanence and, in the dynamism of pure act, the end (the return) of Being. For that reason Being—and beings—only exists in so far as it proceeds from its Source and continues to flow in the Spirit: the *we*, in as much as it gathers all of us into the integrated communion of that perfect reality.

## THE RADICAL TRINITY

We have already said that the Trinitarian reality has to be lived as an experience of faith before it can be formulated as a doctrine. One is reminded of St. Augustine's critique of those scriptural exegetes *qui verba perpendunt et a rebus maxime divinis intelligendis longe remoti sunt* (who weigh words but are far from understanding their meaning, especially in divine matters [*Tract in Ioannem XXV.4*]).

The experience of the Trinitarian reality has a fascinating history that still remains to be studied. The tripartite intuition would seem to be a human invariant. It occurs in a triadic vision not only of Reality (the divine, the human, and the cosmic) but also of Man (body, soul, and spirit) and of the World (space, time, and matter).

We shall concentrate exclusively on the development of the Trinitarian experience in the two millennia of Christian history, as an example that, with due distinctions, could be useful for studying other traditions.

The experience may or may not be the same, but its interpretation must necessarily be inscribed upon the cultural horizon of each age, within the dominant myth of a given moment. The impact of the experience of Jesus in the first communities led to the question of who it was that Jesus called his Father.

At the time it was interpreted as a revelation of the intimate life of God—of the transcendent God, the immanent Trinity. Little by little, as the end of humanity did not come and people had to lend more attention to the things of this world, and in particular as Christianity gained power and political responsibility, the Christian mind was drawn toward a better understanding of the relation of this Trinitarian God with the world. And so they began to conjecture that this divine Trinity was not a *deus otiosus* on his Olympus, but somehow present in what the Abrahamic traditions used to call creation: the *economic Trinity*.

The West's fear of the ghost of pantheism on the one hand and the prudent concern to defend divine absoluteness and the status of the world as creature on the other conspired to delay the third stage that human consciousness today seems ready to accept: the *radical Trinity*.

From the point of view of a "sociology of knowledge," we might venture to say that the "sacred secularity" that is manifesting itself today—as well as ecological (though I prefer the term *ecosophical*) consciousness and the suspicion that modern civilization may not have a future—prepares the ground for the cosmotheandric vision in which, beyond traditional theandricism, the cosmos too is called to *apokatastasis* (Acts 3:21) and *anakephalaiōsis* (Eph 1:10), to quote St. Peter and St. Paul. From a Christian point of view it is therefore a question of a growth in understanding of the dogma. From the perspective of Oriental religions we have only to explain what nearly all have stated—that is, the constitutive bond between Heaven, Earth, and Man. The same can be said of the African religions, to which the dichotomies of Abrahamic monotheism are quite alien.

To put it another way, the modern world of predominantly Western orientation believed it had freed itself of a transcendent God through its prodigious techno-science. Put more simply, a rod of lightning is more effective than a candle to St. Barbara, the telephone is more practical than telepathy, and the planets move without the need for an angel to push them. Moreover, God is with the stronger army, as the politicians quickly understood. Philosophically speaking, evil exists. But after the enthusiasm of practical atheism, or perhaps to reveal unconsciously the *etymon* (truth) of the word used (*entheos*), the modern world is beginning to conjecture that the "God" who was dismissed as superfluous should "incarnate" himself again, albeit in another form. Perhaps God and Man should meet each other halfway—in the earthly domain. That would be the basis for this third stage.

This notion of the radical Trinity is the fruit of what we have called a *theanthropocosmic experience*, and which for reasons of respect for tradition and to avoid cacophony we have renamed *cosmotheandric*.

The integration of the Trinitarian adventure with all Reality does not diminish either divine transcendence or the difference between God and the World, just as Trinitarian unity does not abolish the difference between the divine persons.

Theandrim is the classical and traditional term for that intimate and complete unity that is realized paradigmatically in Christ between the divine and the human and that is the goal toward which everything here below tends, in Christ and the Spirit.

The term "theandrim" indicates with sufficient clarity these two elements of every spirituality: the human element, which serves as the point of departure, and the trans-human factor, which gives it inner life and is its transcendent result. This word is a Christian one, actually, but it is not a concept inherent in and introduced by Christian faith alone but that it is already present as the end toward which the religious consciousness of humanity tends, and also as the most adequate interpretation of mystical experience. In most traditions Man has seen himself as a fallen angel, or a Being coming from God, rather than an evolved animal. His destiny is to go back to the origin he came from: a process the Scholastic theologians called *regressus*.

The Christian symbol is Christ, both God and Man.

"He who aspires to play the angel plays the ass," Pascal used to say.

Could we not add to this aphorism, "Who aspires to play the ass can never succeed," for the divine light shines in us and on us, it envelops us and transforms us from within? Furthermore, "who aspires to play the man" (and only man) inevitably plays the ass (in the Pascalian sense of the words) because Man is much more than a "thinking reed." Man, indeed, infinitely surpasses mere "man." His Being cannot be reduced to a theoretical "pure nature," which would have its own goal and would require a fresh intervention of God to raise it to a so-called supernatural state. The "vocation" that summoned Man into Being destined him from the very beginning to be the Son of God, one with the only Son. To consider Man simply as a "reasonable animal" is tantamount to refusing him the right to his own true goal and depriving him utterly of the hope of ever attaining it. Or, we might say, it is to alienate him, to make him other than what he is by aspiration and divine calling, other (in a word) than *man*; it is to impose upon him a destiny and a calling that debase him.

In the anthropological sphere, the meaning of theandric spirituality is clear. It maintains a harmonious synthesis to the greatest extent between the tensions and polarities of life: between body and soul, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, action and contemplation, sacred and profane, vertical and horizontal.

Here we might say that the fundamental insight of theandrim consists in the realization that Man possesses an infinite capacity that links him up to the asymptotic limit called God; or, to put it the other way round, that God is the end, the limit of Man.

A theandric spirituality succeeds in avoiding anthropomorphism on the one hand and "theologism" on the other. It seeks to reestablish a nondualist vision of these two poles of reality, which become blurred and vanish when one considers them in isolation the one from the other. A purely empirical, down-to-earth anthropology degrades Man, while an exclusively "revelational" theology destroys God himself. Man and God are neither two nor one. Theandricism is that intuition that the majority of thinkers of all ages have grasped and set forth, though in doing so frequently they have stressed by way of reaction one of the poles more than the other, or have used very diverse terminologies that admittedly are incapable of supporting the tension between these two poles of reality. The proper balance of the scales is upset when one ceases to look at the center. If one gazes at God, one is blinded; if one gazes at Man, one is deafened.

As we already said, it is time to integrate the Cosmos into this adventure. By that I mean a theoanthropocosmic spirituality.

The positive working-out of a cosmotheandric vision of reality is a task that our day needs to accomplish. It is not sufficient to acknowledge an openness or undefined relation in some human or cosmic reality; it is a question also of discovering the guidelines and vectors of the sum-total of the data. To say that empirical Man is "contingent" or insufficient and to add the complementary and unqualified assertion that God is "necessary" and wholly sufficient will not do. To do so would be both to misconstrue Man and postulate an artificial *deus ex machina*. It is not a question of imperfect Man on the one side and perfect God on the other, but rather—existent at all times and in all situations—a theandric reality. A "purely transcendent" God is an abstraction of the same sort as a "purely independent" man. There are not three realities: God and Man and the world—but neither is there one: God or Man or the world. Reality itself is cosmotheandric; it is our own way of looking that causes reality to appear to us sometimes under one aspect and sometimes under another.

God, Man, and the World are, so to speak, in close constitutive collaboration for the building-up of reality, the unfolding of history, and the continuation of creation. It is not a case of Man toiling here below and God surveying him from on high, with a view to giving reward or inflicting punishment, and the world remaining impassive at the lucubrations of human mind. There is a movement, a dynamism, a growth in what Christians call the mystical Body of Christ and Buddhists call *dharmakāya*—to give just two examples. God, Man, and the World are engaged in a unique adventure, and this engagement constitutes true reality.

I would make one final remark. Relativity is not the same as relativism, we have been presupposing all the time. If I emphasize the relativity of spiritualities and religions, as also of the basic human attitudes that underlie them, it is out of no desire to level out everything and reduce it to a sort of amorphous equalitarianism. Nor do I pass judgment in any way at all.

The man who is satisfied and convinced in his own fundamental human way of life (religion, spirituality, etc.) must follow it without tormenting himself with useless scruples. It would be fatal for him if a false striving toward artificial perfection produced in his conscience inhibitions and repressions that are invariably pernicious. The synthesis that we look for and that permits each religion and each believer to come in theandric synthesis to the plenitude and perfection of faith and mystical experience is of a totally different kind. I am alluding here to nothing less than a new self-awareness, so to say, on the part of humanity, of which the beginnings and tentative outlines have been glimpsed for some time but that now are unveiled little by little before our astonished eyes. This is, without a shadow of doubt, what constitutes the so-urgent *kairos* of the moment of history that we are in the process of living.

I do not intend, however, in these last pages to embark on a study of this *theandric synthesis* of the different spiritualities or mystical ways that I have cursorily described. I prefer rather to give an idea and explanation of it by a reverse procedure, by pointing out the basic

deviations that threaten each of these three ways if they are followed exclusively and without the necessary cross-references between one and the other. Every sort of particularism, in fact, which limits itself to one or another of these attitudes, neglecting the other two and defying their complementary and essential interconnection, will lead inevitably to a rigid and unilateral spirituality.

These deformations arise from the loss of harmony between the three dimensions of Reality. When they become independent and disconnected from one another, then there emerge the forms of extremism that we shall mention very briefly.

An isolated and solitary *theos*, or one that renders itself superfluous and disappears (atheism), or indeed one that changes into an absolute nothingness in reaction to an absolute existence that converts all creation into pure illusion, leads to *absolute nihilism*.

A self-sufficient *anthropos* who is the undisputed king of creation will not only end up destroying it, but will also annihilate himself, since Man cannot tolerate other Men similar to him claiming to be what the "best" of them believe they are. It is the war of all against all, because if Man is absolute, then so is an individual like any other: *anthropocentric humanism*.

A *kosmos*, the only absolute reality of which Man is no more than one of its creatures, a product of its evolution, without any higher principle, turns into a deified world that sustains all by virtue of laws that he himself has laid down: *angelic materialism*.

Here we shall give only the briefest of sketches.

### Nihilism

There is no doubt that one of the most effective jolts that the Western world is experiencing nowadays comes from nihilism. Without doubt, our time revolts, often with violence, against the existential idolatry that is to be found, so it would seem, in all religions of every sort. Modern Man cares very little in point of fact whether the idol is the true God and the formulas dealing with it *true* formulas (is there not more reality, and hence divinity, in an idol of stone when sincerely adored, for example, than in the mere concept of the Trinity, when not reenacted by a living faith?). Consequently, a growing number of men of undeniable intellectual and moral worth reject and deny the traditional affirmations of the religions concerning the existence and nature of God. In a word, the world is in process of discovering the positive value of atheism.

Basically it is a thirst for the Absolute in Man that is at the root of the nihilist climate of thought in our day. God cannot be *exclusively* an idol, nor an alibi nor simply a person, nor the Other par excellence nor even the Supreme. It is the very fact that he takes with full seriousness his awareness of his fundamental truth that drives modern Man to this impassioned search beyond everything that has existence, causing him to reject all that is only intermediary and to refuse inexorably all vain consolation, all reward, all recompense, all hope. Indeed all religious values, presented as they too often are without sufficient reference to the totality of the mystery, appear to him as just deceptive and inferior remedies merely useful for immature and underdeveloped mentalities.

No indeed, they are not so far from the truth, these nihilists who claim that nothingness, a complete void, is the last word in the mystery! They are not outside the *oikoumene*, these atheists who reject the God—idol so often worshiped by the world's religions. Rather are they the present-day witnesses to a spirituality which was directed to the Father but to a Father "severed" from the living Trinity. They are bearing witness to the truth that no one can ever see the Father, because, in the final analysis, there is nothing to see.

It must be added that neither atheism as a doctrine nor nihilism as a "spirituality" can be accepted as Being that definitive religious attitude that mankind is now in the process of gestating and for which it earnestly longs. They do, however, represent a dimension that must be integrated into that total synthesis that we have called theandristm. After all, was there not a time when it was the Christians who were called atheists precisely because they rejected the Gods?

Another example of this spiritual dimension can be found in Buddhism. In a theandric spirituality, Buddhism finds its true place, but it stresses powerfully that to speak of the ultimate mystery makes non-sense, that to manipulate the Supreme, even with our intelligence, is a blasphemy, and that silence—corresponding to emptiness (*śūnyatā*)—is the base and source of all speech, all thought, and all being.

### Humanism

It is not by chance that the most characteristic crypto-heresy of the West since the Middle Ages has been and still is humanism. Of this the explanation is simple. On one side humanism is a healthy reaction against an excessive emphasis on eschatology and a certain anti-natural supernaturalism. On the other, it cannot fail to be a temptation to mankind now arrived at the age of reflection, for it concentrates all human life and even religion on Man and his anthropocentric perfection.

A religion that is simply humanist is a religion of compromise, running the risk of reducing itself merely to moralism and of emptying spirituality of its most specific dimension. All true spirituality, we may say, is centered upon the point of arrival (God), not upon the point of departure (man). It is based upon the existing union between the two poles—created and uncreated—of human existence, and not upon a dualism that would confront and oppose them to one another (for example, the "couples" [*dvandva*]: theology-philosophy, supernatural-natural, sacred-profane, city of God—city of man, good-evil, God-men, etc.). Religion is not the opium of the people but no more is it their bread, even though it has sometimes succeeded in proffering bread and though even a little opium may from time to time be salutary when there is no other remedy possible. One cannot reduce religion to mere humanism. One cannot eliminate from the mystery of Christ the dimension of the Father in which it finds its fullness and consummation. Religion is not simply anthropomorphism. Paradise is not found on earth, and the saint is not necessarily the humanly speaking perfect man. Christianity is not any sort of humanism, and even the expression "Christian humanism" is a contradiction in terms, as I have tried to explain elsewhere. One can say as much of any religion.

Religion, despite the ambiguity of the term, is what brings Man out of his narcissism and makes him stop believing he is at the center of the universe, saving him from the asphyxia of mere temporality, as Hinduism would put it. "Religion" is what enables us to discover our impermanence and inconsistency, thus freeing us from all egoism and pain, Buddhism would remark. We could paraphrase the message of all religions as precisely what raises Man above himself.

If the spiritual attitude of humanism is one-sided and thus dangerous—untrue, moreover, even when it makes itself out to be the one and only true spirituality—the dualism that is its presupposition is a doctrinal error parallel to atheism. The humanist attitude, however, offers unceasing witness to the utmost dignity of human life upon earth and reminds us that personal liberty is an essential element of all true spirituality.

### Materialism

One needs a certain critical irony in order to appreciate the paradox that concentrating exclusively on material reality leads to spiritualizing it to the point of making it divine. If matter is everything, then it ends up assuming, almost automatically, the attributes of the Spirit.

When the values that Man cannot avoid recognizing are projected into the cosmos, it is matter itself that is transformed into the foundation for all these attributes. Man cannot deny that he thinks, reflects, loves, has a moral conscience, interprets the world, and so on.

Matter becomes the homeomorphic equivalent of the Spirit. Once we have eliminated the God-Father and the God-Son, who always imply a constitutive relation (there is no father without son, no God without Man, and vice versa), then God-Spirit can be absolute just like Matter. The statements that all is Spirit (God-Spirit) and all is Matter (deified Matter) are, in fact, monist propositions that are made and have been made in human cultures. The extremes touch each other: spiritual monism and material monism.

Unfettered spiritualism can easily thrive in monist materialism.

It is a fact—and one that is full of significance—that the church has generally shown herself far more severe toward this type of spiritual movement than toward opposite tendencies. It is the danger of "angelism," which crops up through the centuries under various names and forms: Montanism, quietism, Jansenism, esotericism, puritanism, and so on. *Corruptio optimi pessima*—the corruption of the best is the worst of all. Is it not the greatest pitfall of all religions?

In the spirituality of the Spirit there is a fundamental dimension that it is of urgent importance to recapture, for the evolution of the West and the corresponding present-day emphasis in the East upon material values are driving Men toward a sharp decline to which throughout history Man's nature has been all too prone—toward a loss of interiority and the rejection of the primacy of eschatology (that does not mean, anyway, to affirm its exclusive supremacy).

The importance of a radical Trinitarian spirituality surfaces once again. To this issue, some teachings of the Eastern religions can give a fundamental contribution, by unceasingly reminding us of the reality of the Spirit, and making us aware of its primordial role in human life.

If the spirituality of the Spirit is not anchored by being integrated in the Trinity it falls into the doctrinal error of *pantheism*. It bears witness, certainly, to our life and our existence in God (in him we live and move and have our being) but it has no right to ignore the fact that our life is still in the making, that it is *in fieri*, be-coming, that there is within us a movement toward the Infinite which leads us to freely take part in the adventure of Reality, in the *perichôresis* of the radical Trinity. Pantheism is monism. Reality instead, as we have said, is Trinitarian.

It may now be easier to understand what we are trying to say with our discourse on the radical Trinity. And we define it as radical because it attempts to reach the very roots of all Reality. This does not mean that it somehow rejects either the immanent Trinity of a transcendent God or the active Trinity of a creator God. They are both admissible in this Trinitarian vision of Reality, which allows its so-called creatures to be more than just shadows of an absolute God when they are not mere appearances.

If this is so, then God as well as Man and the World are basically abstractions in our mind of a Trinitarian—or theanthropocosmotheandric—reality.

A mature human spirituality (to continue using this expression) will not then be a dialectical game between these three forms of life or the reductionist specialization in one of the three forms. The dialectical game leads to schizophrenia or to a compromise between

"following God," "cultivating Man," or dedication to "knowing the World." Specialization, as we have already said, leads to nihilism, humanism, and materialism. The harmonious synthesis that we postulate is more of a dialogical game (given that we are Men) between these three constitutive dimensions of Reality, which is neither monist nor dualist.

It is a spirituality that combines in an authentic synthesis the three dimensions of our life. In it are to be found *contemplation* that is something more than thought; *action* that does not limit its purview to the building of an earthly city; God, who is not solely a judge or a scrutinizing Eye; *love* that surpasses all sentimentality; *prayer* that is not limited to petition or even to praise but also silence; *apophatism* that does not get bogged down in nihilism; *grace* that is not against nature; *space and time* that are not transient phenomena but a creative dynamism; and, above all, *intelligence* that allows us to speak about all of this, consciously and responsibly.

This is a spirituality whose most simple expression would say: Man is more than "man"; he is a theandric mystery. God, Man, and World are engaged—though in different ways—in the same adventure. Our dignity is based precisely on this.





## Part Two

### MAN—A TRINITARIAN MYSTERY\*

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\* *Der Mensch, ein trinitarisches Mysterium die Verantwortung des Menschen für eine bewohnbare Welt*, in R. Panikkar and W. Stolz, ed., *Christentum, Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 147–90. Translated into English by James MacDonald.



## PREMISES

### Context

The proposed scope of this reflection is to be broad and comprehensive, more precisely in two specific ways:

a. I wish to cover the last six thousand years of human experience. We are at a cross-roads in the history of the world (which is not the same as just human history), and smaller temporal parameters are inadequate. This is, in fact, the right context for an encounter at the depths of human traditions, that is, religions, avoiding a superficial comparison of finished products that constitute theories outside their *Sitz im Leben* rather than authentic fundamental human intuitions.

I could illustrate my intention by taking as an example our concrete and passive attitude, here in St. Märgen in the Black Forest, toward the liturgy of the last two days, which has been celebrated for over four thousand years, mainly around the Mediterranean, and which has had an important role in the lives of peoples. The fact that we did not take part, perhaps because we come from different religious backgrounds, seems to me a sign of our weakness and of the alienation of intellectuals toward the life of peoples. Over the last two days the people of this place, like others all over the world, were celebrating All Saints and All Souls. These two feasts represent the consciousness that we are in relation with all the *bodhisattva* and *jīvanmūkta* (the saints of the world) who share with us the destiny of reality, and we are also linked with all our ancestors, including those who may not have reached illumination or salvation, inasmuch as reality is not just the present, nor just that of the victors. What has been has been, and will be forever. The dead are still present and share our destiny. Presence does not just mean present. If we want to speak about responsibility toward the world, we cannot have in front of us only what the papers are reporting today. The resonance of our authentic existence spreads throughout the universe.

The scope of this study of mine, therefore, will also consider the experience and the wisdom of past generations. This is not just a question of the Christian or Hindū point of view, inasmuch as it claims to be universal. These very two traditions believe they are rooted in the dawn of time; consequently they both claim to be at the origin—just like most other religions, with obvious variations. For the purposes of our problem, small parameters are insufficient, while larger ones, à la Teilhard de Chardin, inappropriate—in that they risk losing sight of Man.

b. My purpose, then, is to embrace Man in his globality. It often happens, in symposia like this one, that there is just a meeting of ideas and doctrines, in line with the Cartesian spirit. In order to be fruitful, an encounter must also take account of other levels in life. There must be a meeting at the level of the heart; otherwise we are simply having a discussion without allowing true cross-fertilization, because a true human encounter has not taken place.

### Assumptions

In order to make this purpose clearer, I would like to describe five guiding convictions that constitute the basis of my presentation.

#### *The Crisis of the Earth*

With the beginning of the "New Science" after Galileo, and particularly after Newton, the world was considered infinite—in competition, in substitution, or even as an ornament of God's infinity. Today the universe seems to us perhaps unlimited, but in any case finite and of a calculable size: energy, seas, elements, air, space, and even time are perceived as finite and often threatened. The Earth is no longer a prodigious mother who can be loved and exploited for her infinite goodness. The Earth herself finds out that she is oppressed, and thus Man feels threatened. Ecological crisis is no empty term.

#### *The Failure of Reason*

After the French Revolution, to mention a recent date without going all the way back to the Greeks, reason showed itself impotent in fulfilling its supposed function of explaining human life. Since then, world problems (wars, famines, and social injustice) have multiplied to such an extent that science's image of the world has become questionable and unreliable. The atomic age does not represent an improvement in humanity's consciousness: it cannot explain either wickedness or holiness. I do not propose here a blind faith in God, but I do maintain that blind faith in science is even worse. Reality cannot be reduced to any rational paradigm.

#### *The Unreliability of Absolute Monotheism*

Today's Man has lost his naïveté and his innocence—after Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and more than 100 million deaths in war during this century (despite or perhaps because of "In God We Trust" and "Gott mit uns"). In short, the figure of an omnipotent Father is now dead. The individual God to whose will all things led back has been dethroned.

#### *The Insufficiency of Isolated Traditions*

Under the present circumstances no religion, culture, or tradition can claim to offer presumed solutions to human problems, be they theoretical or practical. Alone and isolated, Hinduism is threatened, Christianity impotent, Islam in ferment, Marxism shipwrecked, Buddhism dissolving, animist religions annihilated, secularism in self-destruction, and so on. Individually, people can still take refuge in these traditions, but they do not really offer much protection and humanity is no longer getting satisfactory solutions from its thinkers, artists, and religious leaders. In other words, the transfer of evolutionist thought to the cultures or the religions of the world, in which a less evolved culture or religion should give way to the more evolved one, has proved inadequate. The so-called superior cultures, just like the so-called primitive ones, have been unable to resolve the problems of humanity.

#### *The Irreplaceable Role of All Cultures and Religions*

The solution does not lie in throwing the baby out with the bathwater. In isolation, religions are impotent, but it may well be that cross-fertilization could show us a way out. For

this, we need to deepen the knowledge of our own religion, rediscover the original convictions of the different cultures, and listen to all the voices of the various wisdoms, including those that are distant. The overcoming of fragmentation characterizes the *kairos* of our age.

### Synthesis

This meditation is meant, therefore, to represent a certain synthesis, which constitutes a risky and obviously imperfect undertaking. It is not specifically Christian or Buddhist, Hindû or even secular. But it aims to incorporate a certain number of traditions, in order to allow them to pass on what they have always transmitted, in today's situation. This is not a simple task, because every tradition treats the problem of Man differently; as such, we must not be seduced by answers based on similarity. We must resist the temptation into which many Western scholars fall today when they speak of a "global perspective" or of a world vision, which is a residue of a colonialist, or monocultural, mentality, even though today it is called scientific. Instead, it is a matter of a healthy pluralism and of an interreligious perspective for our diachronic age.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Role of Human Experience

Our topic is "Caducity and Responsibility for the World," which is evidently dialectical. Everything is transient, including our responsibility; consequently our commitment to better the world or to save it is somewhat irrelevant. Hidden in many traditions is the danger of debasing the world as a mere appearance and therefore neglecting it. "*Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?*" Down here all is *māyā*, illusion!" But our full title includes an intermediate term: "Experience-of-nothing" (Nichts-Erfahrung). This word represents the issue for this symposium and may serve as a symbol of my thesis. It is precisely this experience-of-nothing that opens us up simultaneously to our caducity and to our responsibility toward the world. We have an experience of the caducity of the world because at the same time we experience something radically different. We also become aware of our responsibility toward the world, because through this very experience we recognize that we belong to this self-same world.

This experience-of-nothing, however, corresponds neither to an experience on nothing (it has no "object") nor to a non-experience (it has no "subject"), but to the nullity of experience, or the experience of the contingency of our, and every, experience; the experience of the insufficiency of every language; the conviction that nothing can be founded or support itself alone; the intuition that we ourselves are builders and observers (the creator and the creature) of reality—that is, Man lives the nullity of his experience and simultaneously becomes aware of his responsibility for the world, not because he discovers he is a finite being, but because the *radical relativity* of reality is revealed to him, and as a result he becomes aware of his irreplaceable role. There is no fixed point that is absolute, so to speak, but just a relative polarity of the three constitutive poles of the Whole: the divine, the human, and the material. It is all reflected in the title "Man, a Trinitarian Mystery."

### Responsibility toward the World

One of the negative traits of our age is the fact that, because of the power and perfection of the technological complex, the individual feels unable to improve the system and still less able to change it. Our reflections contain the paradox of speaking about a responsibility that not only reduces its span of action but also broadens and deepens it. The world, for which we are responsible, is not only my city but the whole universe, precisely because I am not an isolated individual. This is not an escape into anonymity, whereby, as we speak of an unverifiable responsibility toward the world, we neglect our professional duties. It is a conception of reality that makes every Man aware of his own responsibility, since we are our own nearest neighbors—a self that discovers itself only when the little ego of an individuality closed within itself is overcome. This is why our reflections on Man are not deviations from

the topic of responsibility for the world. The whole of reality is contained within each of us. Mechanistic thought does not fit the mystery of Man. Responsibility for the environment around us already includes total responsibility for the world, and this has repercussions on our existence. True Man is not one element of a great world machine who can be repaired or replaced, as a mechanistic picture of the world would have us believe. He is himself the whole of reality, in a way that is peculiar and unique to him.

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After an introductory section (chapter 3), in which I attribute responsibility for the altering of an integral consciousness of reality to modern individualism and the fragmentation of technological civilization, there follows an attempt (chapter 4) to describe the intercultural Man so as to correct and integrate today's picture of cultural provincialism. The final part (chapter 5) then aims to illustrate the Trinitarian mystery of Man.



## MAN: A REALITY THAT IS NOT REDUCIBLE TO SUBJECT OR TO OBJECT

We are so influenced, often unconsciously, by the objectivization in scientific method that I now deem it necessary to bring our attention to the title of this work.

The title is to be taken literally. It is not equivalent to a work on Man as a Trinitarian mystery. It is not my intention to speak on the individual, or to develop a theory on Man.

Man cannot be understood as an object, since it is he himself who understands, or as a subject, as he possesses attributes and is knowable; he already constitutes the first indication of his Trinitarian integration: he takes part in the Trinitarian dynamic. On the one hand he knows and loves, and on the other he is known and loved, and precisely not in an accidental but in a constitutive way. Without active and passive love and knowledge there is no Human being. In short, Man cannot be reduced to the knower and to the known. Here we shall counter such reductionism.

### The Individual

If our starting point is Man, then I must distance myself from my general ideas and begin from the position we are in. We are in the age of democratic individualism. The starting point that modern thought has spontaneously adopted is the individual. Today's man, generally Western or influenced by the West, can hardly imagine another starting point. As an individual, he thinks, speaks, and acts. It seems strange, for example, to read Śaṅkarāchārya when he writes that language speaks—as the modern comments of Heidegger on the same expression also indicate. Whoever says the word “man” thinks of “himself,” and whoever thinks of “himself” thinks about his own individuality, commonly referred to as “I,” even when, in theory, he may wish to include the other personal pronouns. (There would be no “I” without a “you,” and so forth.) And yet “I” is usually meant as my individuality of “body and soul” and “self” as what we have called ego—that is, as what separates me from others. It is difficult for us to forget this egocentric point of view. I say “forget” inasmuch as here there certainly cannot be any *εποχή* performed by the will. Once introduced, this consciousness of the “I” cannot be removed through will alone. Human freedom fails when confronted with consciousness. Knowing makes us free only in a determinate and limited sense. It frees us from error, but it makes us dependent on the known. We cannot exclude the known, and equally we cannot exclude an effect of such knowledge on our actions. Even when we involuntarily forget the known, we “know” that what has been forgotten is preserved in our unconscious and continues to act there, although we do not perceive it. The truth sets us free, but truth is not knowledge. This is the misunderstanding of every gnosis, but that is not my topic here. In short, modern Man cannot easily forget he is an individual.

When we say "Man," we think of ourselves as individuals and then transfer to others a similar self-consciousness—and thus we naturally weaken our own I, since it must make room for a second and a third I, and so on. In other words, today it is difficult to accept in our experience any starting point other than that of the individual. Perhaps explanations that are philo- or onto-genetic may contribute to understanding another point of view, but before such an understanding can penetrate the consciousness of the I, it will be difficult to say "I" without thinking of ourselves as individuals. It is possible, for example, to attribute to a child or to our distant ancestors an undifferentiated vision of reality, in the sense that neither children nor so-called primitive Men can sufficiently distinguish themselves from others and from the rest of reality. Regardless of its correctness, such a thought may be as useful as it is misleading. It is useful in helping us discover that an integral way of looking at things may exist, that other forms of thought are possible, that ours is too fragmentary, and so forth. But it may also be misleading, if we maintain that evolutionist thought constitutes an ontological truth, that not to have had any individual consciousness in the beginning means that primitive Man had no form of self-consciousness at all, or that he was not as completely evolved in his humanity as we modern individuals. We should remember that human self-consciousness does not mean knowledge of men, but self-knowledge (of Man). Therefore, as we said, only modern individuals are considered men, while Men without a particular individual consciousness are not included in human self-consciousness. Western philosophers and theologians have seriously considered whether slaves, Africans, or Native Americans were Men in the proper sense of the term, since they did not display a very pronounced individual consciousness.

It would be wrong to conclude from this that, in the attempt to overcome the individualist perspective, I am now speaking about Man as a genus. That is not what I intend, because Man as considered here is not the object of a scientific anthropology. I would like to draw attention to ourselves as living Beings, even though it is virtually impossible to forget the individualist point of view once it has entered into consciousness. My aspiration is to overcome individualism without falling (back) into an acritical and undifferentiated attitude.

We need a new approach that is subject neither to the power of the will nor to that of reason. As always, I will have to speak metaphorically on the one hand and historically-culturally on the other, in order to share this new and ancient experience of reality.

The principle by which Man is a person and not an individual is something more than a theoretical assertion about Man. It expresses a human self-consciousness. By person I mean a knot within a net of relations. The knot cannot be isolated from the net, since it is the relations themselves that make up the knot (the person). For this reason "person" is a word that admits neither singular nor plural. My assertion, however, goes beyond the conception whereby the individual (the knot artificially isolated) would be an abstraction, useful for practical purposes. "Man is a person" expresses that fundamental human attitude that links our self-consciousness not to an isolated "soul" but to a personal "experience" of a determinate, albeit differentiated, totality. We should clarify that here we are not talking about what psychology calls a collective experience (*Wir-Erlebnis*). It is rather a personal experience (*Personal-Erfahrung*) that could be called an experience of the Whole. If I consider myself an individual, I will find it difficult to think that other Men consider themselves living parts of a higher (and also human) unity, without putting in jeopardy my own personality and freedom. This is an assumption of the individualist and numerically democratic conception of Man, which does not allow for the development of any social order superior to the democratic one. The question is whether such a conception of Man truly corresponds to Man. The authentic and real Man cannot be quantified, as we shall explain in the next chapter.

### The Integral Person

Mature self-consciousness is not individual. This does not mean that consciousness needs a divine attribute. According to Chinese wisdom, a saint is a person whose soul comprehends the whole people. In the Christian tradition the redemptive act of Christ is universal precisely because Christ, as a complete man, embraces all humanity in himself (see Denz.-Schön. 624, based on 1 Cor 15:22). Angels, as perfect spiritual essences, each constitute a nature to themselves, according to Scholastic theology. In Ayurvedic medicine, the human body is only the seat of consciousness (*cetāna*) and the senses are the channels of the spirit (*manas*). And the Aristotelian notion of a super-individual *nous*, according to the interpretation of Ibn Ruṣd (Averroes) and some Scholastics, aims to overcome human individuality—at the risk of dissolving the human person. A central point of Indian culture is the vision of the Whole. This kind of totality is not the sum of its parts. On the contrary, things emerge as parts as and when they are separated from the whole, and the more they reflect the totality, the more perfect they are; “if the whole is divided, only then is there a name (for the parts),” says the *Daodejing* (chapter 32).

In short, human self-consciousness is neither the consciousness of the individual nor the original consciousness of self (objective genitive), but this consciousness cannot be limited to the *ego*. More precisely, human self-consciousness is personal participation in consciousness—*consentia* in Latin.

It is not, therefore, a form of primitivism or Romanticism, nor indeed are we disowning the great contributions of modern civilization. Rather, we aim at the acquisition of an integral conception of all reality, which we might call postmodern, so that all the fragmentary knowledge of the modern age, probably necessary as a first step, becomes integrated at a higher level. In recent centuries we have seen the fragmentation of reality. We started with distinctions and fell into schizophrenia: Man here and the Earth there, God above and ourselves somewhere else, the subject completely divisible from the object, knowledge as assumption and love as devotion, the arts as luxury and science as necessity, the male as active principle and the female passive, the temporal as caducity and the eternal as ever-lasting, and so on. We must overcome all the *dvandas* (pairs of opposites), says the Vedānta, probably as *coincidentia oppositorum*, or better as harmonic polarities in a tension field.

Certainly, differences must remain, but the divisions have to be overcome. This study deals with that task, with particular reference to the recent divisions within reality: Man and God, time and eternity, or Creator and creature.

We need mutual assistance from the cultures of humanity to overcome this fragmentary vision of reality.

It is not just a question of the confused supposition of an undifferentiated reality, but of the very dignity of Man, who is a microcosm, an image of the whole, a spark of the infinite *agni* (fire): an essential and definitive element of all reality.

Man can also be a *pars* of the whole, but he cannot avoid being a particular *pars*, which claims to be *pars pro toto*, however difficult it may be for him to accept that he knows and realizes the *totum* only *per partem*. This belongs to the human condition. Man is not only *pars in toto*—that is, a more or less independent part of the universe—but rather a *pars pro toto*, who realizes, just the same, the *totum per partem* and who eventually becomes the *totum in parte*. At this point, all mechanistic models, which until recently were decisive for the natural sciences, fall down. I say “until recently” inasmuch as scientists like W. Heisenberg, I. Prigogine, D. Bohm, R. Scheldrake, and others are already pointing a way toward the whole.

We are describing a general human experience: in a certain sense Man embraces all reality; he is *παντα πως* (*quodanmodo omnia*) as expressed by Aristotle for the *ψυχη* (*psyche*). Such an experience can be interpreted as the omniscience of God, *intellectus agens*, *νοῦς ποιητικὴ* (*nous poietike*), absolute Spirit, *νοήσις νοήσεως* (*noesis noeseos*), ātman-brahman, *sarīsāra-nirvāṇa*, ultimate intelligibility, consciousness in general, or whatnot. At the end of the day, it is always the human aspiration toward totality.

Here we find one of the greatest dilemmas in human thought. On the one hand, if we claim for ourselves the nature of infinity, we fall into the *hybris* of all kinds of philosophical idealisms, as though we were God or we had the infinite within our power. The curse of Genesis comes down on us: we are not allowed to want to be like God. But on the other hand, if we project this perfection outside our own self and onto a supreme Being, a certain alienation and impoverishment of Man result. We are then just miserable worms, servants perhaps of a transcendent majesty who demands the sacrifice of our humanity. We may be able to achieve participation with that God, but at the price of our humanity. With varying degrees of success, almost all human traditions, whether they are called religions or something else, have sought a balance and proposed some kind of middle way. Nevertheless, all too often, such a balance is never reached in the heart of peoples, except among the simple and the wise.

This middle way or balance between finite and infinite is difficult to reach through so-called monotheism, as well as through plural atomism. In other words, on the one hand every kind of monism is insufficient and in the end makes everything atrophy, while on the other neither dualism nor any ontological atomism is convincing. The balance can only be achieved by an a-dual experience of all reality.

Regarding this *advaita*, here it will be sufficient to give a phenomenological introduction. If we reflect on reality, we can do so either from outside or from inside. From inside, we must inevitably defend monism. Probably, the "softest" version of this is theism, which maintains that there is an infinite, perfect, higher Being that encompasses all reality in itself. Within this Being a space is allowed for the action and movement of contingent beings, but in and of itself there exists only one single reality, which completely knows, penetrates, and governs itself and therefore everything else. Reality is in itself intelligible and entirely knowable. This omniscient Being is the God of monotheism.

But if we look at reality from outside, that is, if we try to place the whole in front of us, we have to admit a dualism that is ultimately insuperable. Here the "softest" version is probably ontological atomism, that is, the notion of the plurality of the definitive components of reality. Some of these components have consciousness, others not. The universe is the constant dynamic tension—Heraclitus would call it the *εἰς* (*éris*) between the parts.

Both of these conceptions have one and the same weakness: the relation between finite and infinite—the relation between the parts, happen as it may inside the One or inside the ultimate components. This is Plato's *ἐν καὶ πολλὰ* (*en kai polá*). The Trinitarian vision considers precisely these relationships between the parts and the whole and maintains that they form the ultimate structure of reality, without there being any underlying or presupposed substance, whether divine or not. The whole is not just what is given (to whom?), but rather what is, was or will be, or is not. This is what I call reality. We must, however, consider that any claim about reality is man-made and linked to the human condition, whatever that is.

Our study aims to summarize and describe the multiform and millenarian experience of mankind. But it must be expressed in a form that is closer to us. In order to tell it we must also analyze it, so as to render it not only pronounceable, but also refutable and therefore potentially open to improvement.

To make some sort of order, I shall first draft an anthropological perspective (chapter 4) and then attempt an ontological interpretation (chapter 5). But first we must further clarify our point of view.

### The Mystery "Man"

The title "Man, a Trinitarian Mystery," is open to two interpretations. One states that Man, among the many *μυστήρια* (*mysteria*), represents one particular case, which is the trinitarian mystery. Man, in any case and independently of what he is, can be understood as mystery, indeed as a very particular, and specifically trinitarian, mystery—whatever mystery and Trinity actually mean. Under the other interpretation, Man is simply mystery, and furthermore the mystery is Trinitarian. We prefer this second interpretation, albeit with one essential qualification—in other words, the mystery that Man is. Being Man is the mystery and, for us, the access to the Mystery. Only inasmuch as we become conscious of the enormous profundity of humanity do we enter into the Mystery. *Homo Abyssus* is the lovely title of a work by Ferdinand Ulrich (Einsiedeln 1961); according to the metaphysical-mystical Christian tradition, "To be a Man is mystery, or rather: the mystery is anthropomorphic, of human shape," said Károly Kerényi about Greek culture.<sup>1</sup> From a similar standpoint we can say that the mystery is simply reality, and therefore not in an exclusively "human" sense, as we hope will become clearer in the final part. Being Man is one of the Trinitarian dimensions of the Mystery. And this constitutes the above-mentioned qualification. Being Man is the Mystery, but the Mystery is not exhausted in being Man. We must avoid speaking quantitatively, for example, by saying, "The Human being is a part of the mystery." The relationship is precisely the Trinitarian one, in which no "person" is a part of the whole. The relationship is of another kind. In the Christian sense: the Son, the total Christ, risen Humanity, or the cosmos transformed are not one part of divinity. They are divine, without being identified with divinity. The Son is divinity, but divinity is not reducible to the Son. The relationship is dynamic and constitutive.

It is important to repeat: by "Man" we do not mean exclusively either the individual or the genus, and at the same time we do not mean any other abstraction or generality; we do not want to cancel out human singularity. On the contrary, by "Man" we mean every single human being, unique and irreplaceable, and this particular human form, precisely in its uniqueness, reflects, contains, and ultimately is all reality. In this context, the objectivizing method of the natural sciences is not relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> From an interview at the Hermann-Herder Foundation. K. Kerényi, *Menschein als Mysterium in griechischer Deutung, in Weltliche Vergegenwärtigung Gottes* (Freiburg: Herder, 1966).

## THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL *QUATERNITAS*

I want to illustrate what Man is by using three cultures. We could use as many more as we wish, since it would appear to be a universal notion. All the same, three examples may be enough to make the question comprehensible.

### The Hellenic Image of Man

To express this notion I shall begin by using language that is more familiar to the West. The axiom says: Man is a unitary complex of *soma*, *psyche*, *polis*, and *aion*. I take these words from the Greek in general and not as technical concepts of any specific Greek school.

In this linguistic area, when we say *ανθρωπος* (*anthropos*), we do not just mean a body, nor just a soul, but also a community and a surrounding world. It is not just Man in the general sense who is such an entity, but every Man is (not just has) a body, a spirit, a clan, a habitat, to use different words that are in this case equivalent. It is not the determinate concepts that are important, so much as the four dimensions of the human being that the words reproduce.

There is no Man without a body. This body can be made up of different elements, but Man is a corporeal entity, on Earth as in the underworld and in any other way of being. Man is recognized in and through his body. He is not the only being to have a body and he is not only body, but without the body there is no man. What this body is and where it ends, whether it is astral or just earthly, whether mother and child originally form the same body, whether the integral body is visible; these are all open questions that, however, do not negate the corporeal nature of Man.

For the soul the situation is analogous. Whether the soul is individual or a single principle of life, material or spiritual, temporal or eternal—these too are open questions that, in any case, recognize the soul as an essential element of Man. It goes without saying that *ψυχή* (*psyche*) as a principle of life is a general concept that includes the spirit (*πνεῦμα*, *pneuma*), the intellect (*νοῦς*, *nous*), and even the heart (in Hebrew, *nephesh*).

Nevertheless, the body-soul union does not constitute all of Man. De facto there does not exist any similar isolated being, made of body and soul. No entity of body and soul is completely separate. They have a mother and a father and are usually born into a community, without which they could not continue to exist. The individual is not sufficient to himself and in reality does not exist. But not even *de iure* is Man a single entity. Being Man means being community, even beyond "I-you" relations.

Another term for the third dimension would be people, or caste or clan. There is no human being without people or clan, even if one is not aware of it.

With the exception of today's age, no people has ever seen it as unjust or irrational that the whole clan should share the destiny of a few people, for good or for ill, in victory and

defeat, in glory and in shame. Man is family, group, community, people, and so on, in the same way that he is body and soul (and does not just possess them). The clan is not just a sum of individuals; it belongs to being human, but also to destiny. The so-called communal reactions of modern India, for example, like behaviors dictated by the clan, are too common all over the world to be explained purely by individual motivations.

Humanity is a unity with an ontological priority that is relative to individuals, as Pascal always knew. With regard to scientific progress, he observed, "De sorte que toute la suite des hommes, pendant le cours de tous les siècles, doit être considérée comme un même homme qui subsiste toujours et qui apprend continuellement."<sup>1</sup>

I have used the term *polis* to express this human dimension. The *polis*, the city, is the proper symbol of Man's historicity. The citizen, the Man of the city, is political and lives in function of the future. The peasant, on the other hand (not the technocrat of agribusiness), works the land and lives in function of the past: in principio, *ex αρχῇ, in illo tempore*. However, to limit ourselves to the social or sociological aspect (or at least to give it almost exclusive attention) would represent a reduction of Man. To understand this we need only to consider the modern culture within journalism. Man seems to be reduced to a political entity. This Man is also made of body and soul, but both are almost exclusively the source of needs. It is as if he is not conscious of being body and soul, far less of being a habitat in the chthonic sense. How modern hospitals work is significant: "health" does not mean joy of living (as in ancient India) but simply working capability. Restoring someone's health is equivalent to reestablishing the ability to work. In this case, Man is a productive unit (of spiritual values as well), a vote at the elections, a factor in the political mega-machine. Everything is politics (*polis*) and urbanistic presumption, or rather desperation. Plants and animals are considered decorative elements or consumer goods, mountains and clouds entertainment or threat—or at best beauty—but not essential parts of Being. Urban civilization makes us Men into a separate manifestation of reality. Man stands apart and is now suffocating. Man is certainly society, but not just society of rational animals, far less society of business partners sharing the same opinions.

And that is not all; Man's vital threads are not restricted to just the human community, nor even to the whole of humanity. Man is also *aiōn*, a cosmic segment of life, habitat, and earth. Man is not the alien inhabitant of a more or less full space. (Do I have to underline the fact that he has feet, fingers, and even teeth, and not wheels and forks?)

The *aiōn* is not just the place in which we move. Man himself is *aiōn* and is essentially linked to it. An a-cosmic human being (one untouched by space and time) is unimaginable. It would not be a human being. Man can dream of leaving this Earth, just as he can desire to transform this body, but he cannot destroy his earthly roots without ceasing to be a man. The shaman abandons his own body and the cosmonaut leaves the Earth, but only apparently and provisionally, and afterward they return. Earth remains the measure of Man. The modern temptation of nuclear suicide is linked to the earthly uprooting that is typical of the technological era.

The idea that Man can have a life independently of the Earth, or that health can be just the result of microprocesses within the individual, or that someone can be effectively separated (and not just morally) from their own clan—these are all thoughts that could not be formulated outside the modern individualist culture. A man's clan means his place in the

<sup>1</sup> "Préface sur le traité du vide," in *CŒuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1936), 323: "So that the continuity of men, over the course of the centuries, should be considered as one single Man who always subsists and continually learns."

world, as the Sanskrit *sthāman* still testifies. This place is the base, the root, the stock, as the etymology of the word itself shows.

It is abundantly clear, therefore, that here *aiōn* (*aiōn*) means *saeculum*, the spatiotemporal structure of the world, a space of earthly time that is full of life and matter. *Aiōn* is the vital force of the world, the living cosmos (which is why it is filled with time).

By saying Man we are saying body, soul, community, and environment, all in one. Whoever moves, thinks, speaks, or eats does not do so alone, drawing on an individual base: body, spirit, companions, and earth belong to him as well. Whoever loves has already overcome his own individuality, and the same goes for those who eat or even breathe. Although obvious, these things sometimes elude our grasp. Man is more than a small mirror on the big world; he himself, as a man, is the entire world in a smaller form. *Rota in medio rotac*—"a wheel within a wheel"—said the mystics after Ezekiel 1:16; τροχος εν τροχω (*Trochos en trocō*), says the Septuagint. Everything is compenetrated by everything. The Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* is the fundamental law of reality.

Our quaternity, expressed in such generic terms, could be open to the objection that an elephant, for example, also has a body, a soul, a community, and a habitat, and that, in a certain sense, the elephant is all of that. However, this would actually reinforce my thesis of the co-belonging of everything with everything. By focusing our attention exclusively on the specific (an application of the principle of contradiction), we have weakened the sense of totality (principle of identity) and almost forgotten that everything is, from one time to the next, unique. It is not a question of demonstrating which different elements of body, soul, community, and habitat Man is made up of, but rather the fact that he is actually made up of these dimensions, whatever their essence may be.

Where does God fit in this integral anthropology? We have deliberately not mentioned the divine, because the divine, like animals and plants, represents something that is differentiated from Man, notwithstanding the fact that there are intimate relationships among all the realms of reality. We have avoided the divine also in order to avoid compromising its transcendence by making it a fifth factor. But the main reason has been a methodological one, since here we are describing the anthropological point of view as an introduction to overcoming anthropocentrism without falling into theocentrism. Man as a Trinitarian mystery actually means his interior integration into the whole of reality and participation in the *perichōrēsis* of all things, Being himself one of these relations. The Trinity has no center (outside its own, so to speak). It cannot be reduced to any "superior" unity. It is not monotheism. There is no Supertrinity. The *distinctio realis* between *deus* and *divinitas* was rightly rejected by the Christian tradition (see Denz.-Schön. 188, 745, etc.). The Trinitarian vision has no place (since it has no need) for a (fourth) point outside the Trinity. Being Man is a *co-esse* with the divine—and also with the cosmos. Man, as such, is the *quaternitas* we have described, that is, a polar counterpoint to divinity and the cosmos. The interior quaternity of the divine could be described as infinity, freedom, transcendence, and immanence. The interior quaternity of the cosmos could be described as space, time, mass, and energy. Here, however, we are only concerned with Man.

### Indic Anthropology

Turning now, albeit briefly, to a different culture such as the Indic one, we should not be expecting precisely analogous concepts, but rather ones that we could call homeomorphic correspondences. We must emphasize that the correlations are not one to one. Only the (anthropological) *quaternitas* is relevant here. The formulation of the problem is another



one, and the principal categories are different, as are the modes of thought. Comparisons are dangerous and could easily give us a mistaken picture. This is precisely why another perspective is so important: it saves us from the danger of treating our convictions as absolute. We cannot respond to the question of what Man is while excluding other perspectives. No culture and no religion can tell us *a priori* what Man is, since the question concerns Man as a subject (not just as an object), and cannot be answered without listening to the voice of the human beings who are most distant from us. What Man is, is not a scientific question, because Man himself is the questioner, and therefore no questioner can be ignored. Nor indeed can his answers.

The key words in Indic anthropology are *jīva*, *aham*, *ātman*, and *brahman*. I shall summarize them briefly without repeating again that they are not univocal concepts belonging to a specific philosophical school of thought, but the dimension in which Indian thought moves. Words are more than just concepts.

*Jīva* indicates the vital principle of Man, whether that be eternal, mortal, or simply appearance. *Jīva* is both material and spiritual, or rather the distinction is not in itself appropriate. It is perhaps partly homeomorphic to the Hebrew *nephesh*. *Jīva*, if you like, represents the integration of body and soul; it represents my individuality. My actions and my activities belong to my *jīva*. I am a *jīva*, but *jīva* is not all that I am.

Man is also *aham*, that is—literally—an I. There is no I without self-consciousness, without the involvement of other centers of consciousness, even if these centers are not absolute—and they are perhaps illusory, according to some schools. An absolute I is a contradiction; it would cease to be an I, if it could not affirm itself before another—of whatever species.

My position within my community belongs to my *aham*. My *aham* depends on the knowledge I have of myself and also on the recognition I have from others; it is a social category, intimate and at the same time ontological. My *aham* is not real without a *tvam*, a you, nor without the experience that "I" myself am also a you: *tat tvam asi*, "you are that," or rather you are a you—which in turn validates the I.<sup>2</sup>

Man as such, however, is much more than just a body and soul. Man is also *ātman*, the Self. It is precisely through concentration that we discover that our center is also the center of the world—renouncing the private property of our I, or more accurately the egoistical attitude, renouncing our *ahamkāra*. I am not just what I think I am, but what I really am. The experience of *ātman* does not consist in thinking that "I" am the center of the universe, but rather in experiencing that the center of the universe is my true self.

If I can experience a pure "I am," it will not differ from any "I am" pronounced by another human being. It is a pure "I am" and not an "I am A," while someone else says, "I am B." In this latter case, the I is respectively A and B; therefore, the "am" does not capture the Being, but just the two respective entities. But when there is no difference of predicate it is different, because we do not intend an A and a B, but a pure "I am." We could rephrase this and state that a divine principle resides in Man and gives him an infinite or divine dignity. Such an *antaryāmin*,<sup>3</sup> this inner guest, this *intimior intimo meo*,<sup>4</sup> "is" what I really am. To put it differently, the "I am" also includes in me the immanence of *ātman*. Immanence is

<sup>2</sup> See my hermeneutics of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* VI.8ff. in *The Vedic Experience. Mantramahājari. An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 746ff.

<sup>3</sup> See *Bṛhadāranyaka-upaniṣad* III.7.1ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Augustine ("interior intimo meo et superior summo meo": *Confess.* III.6.11); Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* I, q.8, a.1, etc. See other texts and comment in R. Panikkar, "The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft* 64 (1956).

not transcendence reversed, but what every being ultimately is. Man as *âtman* is the center of the whole of reality.

This center, which is also Man, cannot be localized; it is not anywhere, or rather, by almost universal tradition, it is everywhere. We could add, tautologically, that the center of reality is actually wherever there is reality. *Brahman* is not another essence, though an infinite one. *Brahman* is not a being, nor does it have an existence, strictly speaking. The objective identification of Man with the universe would be a bad formulation of this intuition. *Aham brahman* does not mean pantheism or monism. It is an expression of the experience that the "I am," which we can truly express only in the absence of any egoism, would have no predicate other than *brahman*, if this were only possible—but *brahman* cannot be a true and proper predicate. In fact, it is the foundation of all predicate functions. "I am *brahman*" does not mean that my little ego has expanded to become *brahman*, but rather that the affirmation *âtman* = *brahman* can be realized in an existential sense by me, precisely because I am too.

"*Aham brahman*, I (am) Brahman" does not mean "Gopal is Brahman." "Brahman is (the) I" would be an imperfect transcription, but nevertheless a legitimate homeomorphic correspondence.

To repeat: "What Man is" cannot be equated to what I or we think of Man, but means what Man himself is, not just what we intend by Man. This latter aspect is no more than an opinion or a part of the essence of Man. None of us can speak in the name of all mankind. In the Indic tradition Man characterizes himself as *jiva*, *aham*, *âtman*, and *brahman*; he is not defined as an individual animal possessing reason, but rather as that center of reality that feels decentered because of ignorance.

What concerns us now is human consciousness of itself. Caraka, the greatest exponent of Indian medicine, implies unequivocally that the individual emerges as such only when the corpo-sensorial form-complex participates through *manas* in universal consciousness (*cetâna*). The individual Man is a *saññiyogi-puruṣa* who, through the senses (*indriyâṇi*), perceives the *para-âtma*, the transcendent *âtman*. My consciousness is not the private property of my person. Self-consciousness is not to be equated with my consciousness of the *ego*. The latter, strictly speaking, is only a participation, more or less profound, in consciousness and is more or less true according to the level of distinction between consciousness of the *ego* and of the self.

### The Cosmic Comprehension of Man

The original spirituality of primordial religions constitutes our third example.

Man is an organic unit of the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. In a very approximate way we can say that earth corresponds to the body, water to life, fire to the spirit of the people, and air to the *aiôn* (cosmos). In any case, these correspondences are merely relative. Here it is maintained that Man is a microcosm, a mirror of all reality and of the same nature as the other essences. We underline the interconnection of all reality, which is not limited to mankind or to living beings. Today many so-called erudites are so heavily influenced by the Western anthropology of the last century that it is almost disturbing to see a rehabilitation of, for example, animism or a theo-cosmic link to man. Once again we must emphasize that we are not dealing with a relegation of Man to a simple "nature," but rather an elevation of the four elements to what they effectively are: the original living and spiritual substances of the universe. Certainly, fire does not just mean oxidation or loss of electrons, but rather something like the *agni* of the Vedic tradition and the *ignis* of the Latin-Catholic tradition.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For the Veda, see texts in R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, op. cit., and for the Christian tradition,

In the same way, water cannot be identified with  $H_2O$ . One only needs to think of the uncreated water in the Bible, or the divine water of the Indo-Iranian peoples and African religions.

It is sometimes surprising how debased has become the experience of reality by people who have been poisoned by the technocratic complex. Artists and mystics are often the only exceptions.

There follows an image of Man that is not separated from the rest of reality. Man is neither a dominator of Nature nor a separate manifestation of it. Man, in fact, is not reduced to pure "nature," since by "nature" we do not mean the scientific concept.

Since we cannot show contempt for any image of Man, we must not neglect the individual consciousness of the modern world either. Today, as we have already said, no culture can claim the right to speak for all, and no culture is able to give a satisfactory response to the current situation of Man. The next part proposes a provisional summary of these issues: an open and provisional summary, not a system. We must, and can, try to live the Mystery.

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see the Latin liturgy of 2nd February (blessing of the candles on the feast of the Purification of Mary) and of Easter night: "invisibile igne, id est, Sancti Spiritus splendore," says one of the blessings simply.

## MYSTERIUM

## Experience of Transcendence

Almost all religions chant or proclaim the inexpressible depths of divinity, the unattainable heights of the divine (although this term is only one of its possible denominations), and emphasize the experience that is beyond all thoughts and representations of Man. And yet it is Man who makes the claim, even though he believes he is capturing a transcendent revelation. Transcendence can only adhere to us men, speak to us, approach us, make itself comprehensible, and reveal itself inasmuch as its place is also in immanence, in ourselves. Immanence, as the most intimate little room of our being, is the destination of transcendence. Immanence and transcendence are in a relationship of co-belonging.

Even those philosophical and theological schools of thought that maintain that receiving revelation is actually a grace of transcendence itself have to admit that the receiving takes place in a receptacle that is transformed, but still human. Furthermore, no revelation can claim to be a divine monologue; on the contrary, it is a divine-human dialogue. In other words, Man remains an essential and unmoveable pole of all reality, a life companion of reality. There is no such thing as a pure, exclusive, and unrelated transcendence. It is not only *de facto* that we cannot prescind or put ourselves to one side; there is no "something" completely independent of Man. But also *de iure* we cannot effect that absolute separation between Man and divinity. Our participation in reality is not by chance. We belong to it and consequently we assume the co-responsibility of being. To put it very simply, the divine does not exist without the human, just as Man does not exist without divinity. Both the "exists" and the "does not exist" occur in that ultimate layer that does not admit any further "retro," so that we must say "it cannot exist." Even "there-could-be-an-absolute-transcendence" remains dependent on our capacity for thought: a thing "can" not exist, if the very "can" still depends on our thought.

Our starting point was the cultural commonplace according to which humanity speaks of transcendence and, as a consequence, that must be the cause of some kind of experience. This led to the postulate of a transcendent God who was then imagined, because of His perfection, as totally independent and superior to us. My thesis, which relates to the trinitarian conception of the human being, consists in the claim that there is no such absolute independence. There is no absolute transcendence, precisely because Man too, as such, has his own place in ultimate reality; he too belongs to the Trinitarian mystery.

Before developing philosophical or theological interpretations of such an experience, before claiming that this experience offers an answer or that it comes from transcendence, that it entails a revelation, that it refers to the divine mystery or the enigma of reality or the abyss of nothingness, before making use of any kind of theological theory, we should first live the naked experience itself. And yet that is not possible, because such a pure experience does not and cannot exist. It would be an experience without subject and without object.

We use the term "experience" as the designation of an immediate contact between a knower and a known, and thus as an intellectual intuition. If the experience were naked experience, we would not be able to distinguish the subject or the object of the knowledge, since pure experience does not allow reflection on itself—as that would constitute a second act that would cloud the purity of the original experience. Any knowledge of the experience would rob the original experience of its simplicity: first, because this second experience would prejudice the experience itself, and second, because the experience would no longer be immediate, as it would be mediated by the second knowledge. Consequently, at the ultimate level we can say: experience is just one factor, which cannot be isolated, of a state of things. Paradoxically we can speak of experience only as a phenomenon that follows from experience itself, and therefore no longer as pure experience. We deduce experience from a more complex state of things. And this somehow highlights the unthinkable and unpronounceable nature of reality. It is the same reality that includes us, so that there cannot be a total knowledge of reality, unless we presuppose that reality is only consciousness, and more precisely self-consciousness—and that is an absolutely idealist position.

Here we have a discovery with serious consequences. The claim that there cannot be any pure experience means that reality cannot be reduced to pure consciousness, or rather no kind of monism corresponds to the facts, unless on the condition that we negate those dimensions of reality that are impenetrable by the spirit—and leave unresolved the problem of the degree of reality present in phenomena.

In any case, many religions are so intent on emphasizing transcendence that they shift the balance toward it and away from Man, who then appears transitory or as an accidental event in the universe. Thus the opposite reaction of antitheist and atheist movements is understandable. If God has total responsibility for his creation, then what is Man about?

Nonetheless, historically we cannot deny a genuine experience of the divine. There is a certain experience of transcendence. However, this experience is, first, a human experience, and second, it is not a pure experience—so there is no "pure," that is, absolute spirit. Every experience is inseparably bound to memory and its interpretation, and in our case also to the particular weight of historicity, or accumulated tradition. We can say that the experience of the absolute is not based solely on memory and depends not only on a cultural interpretation but rather also has a history that is now ineradicable.

This does not mean that there is no divine dimension of reality, but that such a dimension, in principle, is not completely independent of Man. Reality is not a realm exclusive to God, but also a realm of Man and the cosmos.

### **Overcoming Anthropocentrism, Theocentrism, and Cosmocentrism**

The trinitarian vision I will attempt to describe adopts a *via media* that does not favor theocentrism or transcendence at the expense of anthropocentrism or immanence; nor on the other hand does it reduce everything to humanism without recognizing the divine—and also the cosmic—dimension. The three poles of reality are equally definitive; they reciprocally co-penetrate one another. There is no need to underline the unconvincing nature of any cosmocentric theory that reduces Man to pure matter. Consequently we shall not give any close attention to material monism.

When we are dealing with Man as a Trinitarian mystery, we are not speaking about the subject Man. The mystery is the whole reality. Of course, it is Man who speaks and tries to communicate this experience; Man is, so to speak, our viewing angle. Man, however, makes

no affirmations on "himself" but rather reflects the whole of reality as such, which in turn is expressed through human language and experience. At this point we might mention the first *ῥg* of the second verse of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*: "Man is effectively everything" (*RV* X.90.2). But this Man, as we have said, is neither the individual nor humankind. Here we cannot speak of any sort of anthropocentrism. The mystery is everything. Man too is the mystery.

God, Man, and Cosmos are three words by which, according to their corresponding perspectives, we represent this totality, but without thereby reaching a higher unity. Such a unity would become monism and suffocating monarchy, while plurality would turn into dualism and destructive anarchy. Each of the three poles is definitive and cannot be traced back to one of the others or to a supposed center. Nevertheless, each of these poles presupposes and contains the other two. Their reciprocal resonance is perfect.

If we are to take this upheaval seriously, we must also reformulate our question. As long as we continue to ask, "Who do we mean when we say 'Man'?" we will not get a satisfactory answer, because we, the questioners, are left out of the question. The question is not "Who do we mean?" but "Who is this Man?" We can neither think nor intend such a questioner, nor can we speak of or to him. These are all human operations in the accusative, or indeed the dative, case. "Who do we intend, think, or speak to?" This "who" is not the thinker or the questioner, but the thought and the questioned. Instead we should ask, "Who intends, thinks, or speaks?" "How can we know that through which everything is known?" ask the *Upanishads*.<sup>1</sup>

I am not speaking, then, of Man as a Trinitarian mystery. That might be objective theology or good anthropology, but it is not relevant to the question we are addressing.

We should consider that the ultimate questions require a methodology that is essentially different from that of any other science or human activity. Overlooking this fact has been the cause of serious misunderstandings in the past. Here we are not concerned with science or gnosis; here we cannot exclude myth.

Our purpose requires a basic approach that is radically different. It requires a consciousness that is inexpressible in principle (and not just because we are finite or imperfect). The use of the word "mystery" is apposite. Το μυστήριον ἀρρητον (*to mysterion arreton*). Here we must be silent, and yet not every silence will grasp the issue—or rather, not every silence is mute. Here I can call on the etymology of the Greek term *mysterion*: μύω (*myō*) means to close or be closed, perhaps to move in a circle (we can think of the Latin term *moveo*). It is from this that the figurative sense came: to close the eyes or mouth; not to speak or see; to remain mute. There is a silence that is mute because it does not want to say anything: the lips are closed voluntarily, we conceal something. This is a kind of secret revelation. Nothing shines brighter than the secrets of the heart that we wish to conceal, says a Chinese proverb. Another silence is mute because, regardless of our wishes, nothing can be said—for the question is too complicated or difficult: we do not know what, in fact, should be said, and if we try to say too much in one go, we end up babbling. There is a third kind of silence that is mute, because there is nothing to say: all is without sense. However, there is also yet another, fourth silence that appears as silence precisely because it does not hide anything; it is silent because it does not keep silent about anything; it is completely transparent and therefore invisible. It has nothing to be silent about, since the *logos* has already said what was to be said and expressed itself completely, without thereby exhausting reality, because "with" the *logos* there is still an effect that is totally inexpressible. The word expresses the unexpressed. As long as the word exists, what the word comes from also exists, which is silence, the *σῆμα* (*sige*) of patristics, the

<sup>1</sup> See *BU* II.1; II.4.7–14; *AU* III; *Kaus* III.8; *Ken* II.1–3; *Mait* VI.7.

symbol of the Father in the Trinity. The experience of the inexpressible is closely related to the experience of nothingness in every experience; this means that, in the end, no experience, and therefore no consciousness, can be identified with all reality, or, in other words, that reality cannot be reduced to consciousness alone—and this in turn means that monotheism does not really grasp the issue, and thus we come back once again to the Trinity.

### The Integral Man: A Trinitarian Dimension

Corresponding to this silence there is a fundamental Trinitarian vision; the *logos* is indeed all reality, and therefore equal to God in Christian language, yet it does not exhaust reality. The Word is word because it expresses silence and comes from silence; this is possible because there exists a space where it can happen—the Spirit—and because it comes from an origin that lets it happen—the Father.

From the outside, the first forms of silence appear closed; they conceal, and we are unable to open the closed loop. The ultimate form of silence does not admit any circle. Its circumference is infinite and cannot show any beginning or end. It is incommensurable to the radius. *Logos* and spirit cannot be traced back to a common denominator. Consciousness and matter are such dimensions. Every dimension, or every relation in traditional terms, presupposes the others and relies on them. There is no priority within this interlacement—either logical (the *logos*), ontological (the Father), or spiritual (the Spirit); any priority depends only on our perspective.

The human being, according to my thesis, is a dimension, a constitutive relation of all reality. Every human is a center of the universe, or more precisely, in every human the whole of reality is con-centrated, but Man is not the only center. Every other human is a similar concentration. In reality there is no one center, because there are as many centers as there are "components" of reality. Reality is centered on itself, but its circle is not in any one place—as we read in the *Book of the XXII' Philosophers*.

This vision can be found in the most diverse cultures. At this point I should lodge a protest, regarding the science of religions, against the modern Western exclusivism, typical of a certain Christian theology, which claims that the Trinity is a Christian monopoly. I do not want to deny that there is a specific Trinitarian understanding, just as it would be equally mistaken to maintain that the Christian conception is just a copy of the ancient ones.

The entire reality is trinitarian, and the three dimensions reciprocally co-penetrate one another. This *circumincessio* or *perichôrêsis* (περιχώρησις) is so perfect that the three elements can be distinct but not separate. Sky, earth, and their "in-between"—or past, present, and future—might be cosmological formulations of it. *Sat*, *cit*, and *ânanda*, the *trikāya*, the Christian Trinity, and so on, might be religious formulations of it. We are not claiming that all these conceptions are equal; we simply ascertain that these homeomorphic correspondences exist, without however going into any comparisons. What concerns us here is the vision itself, the "metaphor-at-the-root."

The main intuition is the following: all reality is made up of a kind of Trinity that is held together by reciprocal relations.

We could begin with the Christian Tri-unity and affirm that the Christian revelation of Divinity is valid *ab intra* as well as *ad extra*, and that the Trinitarian structure of the Whole corresponds to one origin, one reality, and one dynamic: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ would be the cosmotheandric symbol κατ'ἐξοχὴν (*kat' exochên*). He is all in one, undivided, and unblended between divine, human, and cosmic.

### The Three Acts of the Anthropocosmic Drama

What counts is to discover oneself as "I am." This is the first act. This is the primordial consciousness that cannot be traced back to anything prior. Whoever realizes "I am" is, so to speak, saved. But we are not (yet). This We is also reality, and here begins the adventure of the second act. We are permeated by the yearning for knowledge—that is, we are not satisfied with the "I am." We are in search of a predicate. The I constitutively needs a you; otherwise it would not be an I. And so we want to realize this I. Our consciousness of this shortcoming appears as dissatisfaction. In Buddhism it is called *dubkha*; in the Abrahamic religions, original sin; the fall in most African religions; *avidyā* in Hinduism; incompleteness in some philosophies; and so on. We are therefore this kind of dissatisfaction; restlessness is our human constitution.

The first step in this fatal act is the discovery that I am not satisfied, that I am naked.

I discover I am imperfect. Once we get started on the analysis—on the search for what "I am" actually is—there is no end to it: all the way through the most extreme atomism and beyond, to infinity. Once we begin searching for the object we cannot slow down, because objects can become fragmented, divided, analyzed, and chased ever more and ever further. The ancients believed that matter had its own consistency, such that Achilles could have caught up with the tortoise despite Zeno of Elea's theoretical arguments to the contrary. And so thought was not everything; reality was more complete. For a brief period, science believed in the autonomous character of Nature. Neither atoms first nor quanta later could be divided. Today the resistance of matter has given way to technological thought. The boundaries of the *a-tomos*, of the individual, that is, of the in-divisible, are drawn ever more distant. In reality there is no boundary anymore. God above and the atom below were the natural boundaries of the human picture of the world, and Man was in between. Both these boundaries have now exploded. It is not surprising that in the modern age we speak of the uprooting of Man—with no heaven above and no earth below.

The next step is a specification of my being a creature. I am differentiated as a human being. I belong to a specific race, culture, caste, and family, and I am limited in space and time. The final step is that of individuality. But the individual remains enigmatic and is further fragmented, just like the atom. We have searched for it in the soul, the body, the heart, the brain, chromosomes, cells, and even deeper in elementary particles. The problem of Western culture is not so much that it divides up the fields of the knowable into parts and subparts, as atomic physics demonstrates in exemplary fashion by its fragmentation of knowledge and therefore of Man, but rather that it has no satisfactory answer to the problem of "I am," since it is looked for in the opposite direction. The subject is forgotten as we get stuck in the search for an ever more refined object. Psychology too, and Teilhard de Chardin himself, move in this direction when they search in this direction: the unconscious, the archetypes, the omega point.

We are now almost at the end of this centrifugal movement, further and further from the I. Precisely because we are in a blind alley, we may be able to have a better intuition of the radical and necessary conversion (*μετάνοια, metanoia*) and grasp its necessity with greater urgency. This would be a recovery of the I, the "I am."

Now we have the third act: I am I. I am was the first act. The second was I am the predicate, or creature—man, Indian, Christian, citizen, body-and-soul, agglomeration of atoms, a particle in the cosmos, energy, individual, and so on. Now we have closed the loop: "I am I." Etymologically, this statement is a mystical affirmation. Man experiences that he ultimately



wants to be I. He wants to become himself and realize himself. To the question "What am I?" after thousands of years of deviation, the simplest answer is the original one: *I am I*. And this is the I of the third act.

Man as a Trinitarian mystery means that the I of the third act cannot give up that of the first, since everything is in a state of co-belonging, and yet it is not completely identified with it.

The second act was not in vain, and still matters. The three acts go together. They are only three scenes of the universal drama in the theatre of reality where everyone—whether actor or spectator—plays together.

The *regressus* (return) of the Scholastics, the redemption (*σωτηρια, sotēria*) of Christianity, the *mokṣa* (liberation) of the Hindus, and suchlike represent true forms of fulfillment. Something has occurred, even if it is simply a discovery (of the I). There is also a dynamic therein, and so a way must be sought. The task peculiar to humanity is to embark on this pilgrim's way toward the conquest of true identity: to transform the universe or, to put it in Christian terms, to work for the new heaven and the new earth, to redeem the cosmos, to cooperate (*συνεργειν, synergein*) in the birth of the complete Christ.

Whether this way is a conscious process or an action, pure grace or an impossibility, or even a dream or illusion is a series of questions upon which the religious traditions of humanity are at odds; but they all agree on the fact that discovering the illusion or fulfilling the task is the principal desire of Man.

Man, by his very constitution, not only stands between heaven and earth, as most religions maintain, but is also on a journey—*homo viator*—from non-Being to Being, as we find in the Upanishads (*asato mā sad gamaya* [from non-being lead me to being])<sup>2</sup> and later in Christian-Scholastic resonances ("creatura . . . sibi autem relicta in se considerata nihil est").<sup>3</sup>

I am I and nothing less than I. Finding oneself (the self) has been the object of wisdom since the beginning of human self-consciousness. But the I of the third act, after the lengthy digressions of the second (objective) identity, cannot be just the repetition or the reflection of the first I. This is where the Trinitarian mystery comes in. The "third" I, where I am indispensable, is important and even real. This I is an essential element of reality. It is experienced as a you—the you of the first I—but a you that represents a definitive pole of reality and that cannot be reduced to pure contingency. "I am I" means that I am the I that is conscious of itself, having discovered its essential relation with itself. Moreover, it is not content to be somehow swallowed up by the first I: No reabsorption! No pantheism! The mystery of reality is not static but expanding; the spiral widens; the adventure of reality—the cosmotheandric destiny, the Trinitarian life—is not something that only happens in an unreal time, as though everything were thus since eternity. The life of the Trinity, to which Man belongs, is a radical novelty each time. The three acts occur in a reciprocal "space," which we cannot define as contemporary or a-temporal, and in any case they do not occur in succession. Our time is that of the experience of diachrony (every time is different and at the same time real).

### The Christian Trinity

We have one last question remaining, since our title includes the word "Trinitarian" and some readers may suppose it to be a Christian term. In fact, although we have no transcultural language, an intercultural reflection may serve to draw our attention to the fact that many concepts—like grace, God, sacrament, and indeed Trinity—are not the

<sup>2</sup> BU1.3.28.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia* q.V, a.1: "The creature left to itself, and considered as such, is nothing."

private property of any one religion. However, the question over Christian language is still valid: What has all this to do with the Christian Trinity? Where is the orthodoxy, in the fullest sense of the word?

Orthodoxy is neither microdoxy nor monodoxy; that is to say, orthodoxy—true *δόξα* (*doxa*)—cannot be identified with popular conceptions of the *rudes* (simplest), as the Scholastics would put it, that is, with a mean or narrow opinion, nor indeed with a single doctrine and monolithic formulations. Orthodoxy gives a satisfying answer, or at least not a false one, to a concretely posed question. Here the question itself is essentially broadened and deepened. It is not a completely different question, but is much wider and more radical. Neither Plato nor Aristotle, Śaṅkara nor Confucius can offer us a satisfactory framework today.

Nevertheless, deep down the requirement is still the same. What is the situation that Man is in, and indeed reality? How do we reach the kingdom of God; how do we become enlightened; how do we overcome evil or eliminate suffering?

Many answers are no more than a shifting of responsibility: Nature, the devil, original sin, human freedom, the inscrutable will of God, being, nothingness . . . these are all hypotheses that must be clarified anew in the light of our situation.

We have attempted a new hermeneutics based on the central dogma (that of the Trinity) of many religious traditions, often using the language of Christianity.

The idea of the Trinity was given its dogmatic formulation as a result of the need to recognize a place for transcendent Divinity following the shock of immanent (divine) incarnation, and therefore to overcome monism (pan-Christism) without falling into dualism. Neither dualism (where Christ would be a second God, or the world would not be divine and Christ an unreal apparition: Docetism) nor monism (where no incarnation would be possible, or Christ would be all) is reconcilable with the principal Christian experience.<sup>4</sup> The Trinity does require (through Christ) that the cosmos has a place in ultimate reality, and above all, that Man is accorded his own role in the transformation of reality.

The present contribution is intended to maintain this line without being limited exclusively to traditional Christian theology.

Not only must we recognize the truth present in other traditions, but we must also find a way to keep them in consideration and, if possible, incorporate them, and do this in a way that does not make distorted caricatures of these other interpretations, or by methodological error reduce them to Christian parameters. It is for good reason that we have spoken of homeomorphic correspondences.

The Christian idea of Trinity aims at qualifying that of monotheism, in order to give a place to Christ as true Man and true God. This Christ, however—the Son of Man—is not just Jesus but also, according to Peter and Paul, his entire Body and therefore the cosmos transfigured. If every being, and in particular every man, is a Christophany and Christ the Son of God, there follows the Trinitarian understanding of the vision outlined here.

These reflections would merit further study in order to uncover their basic conception of reality.

Perhaps we can add just one thing, coming back directly to our theme of co-responsibility toward the world.

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<sup>4</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Rtatatva: A Preface to a Hindu-Christian Theology," *Jeevadharma* 49 (January–February 1979): 6–63.

### Human Responsibility toward the World

If Man, in any one of his existential forms, is an essential and definitive pole of reality, the transformation of the world will be his direct, albeit non-exclusive, task. Responsibility for the world does not solely fall under the competence of the divine, nor is it left to chance. Perhaps more than ever before, we are conscious that the destiny of Being depends on us too. Is it necessary to cite the Word of Man as shepherd of Being?

The post-atomic era introduced a *novum* in human consciousness. Mankind had already been aware for a long time that the world would end, that one *kalpa* follows another, that eschatology is not an illusion. But what had not been imaginable until then was the notion of a probable cosmic suicide—that Man himself could be the cause of this end, that his co-responsibility was so deeply anchored that he could injure and perhaps kill Being itself. That God or Nature could annihilate the world is a traditional thought. That is why Man tried to placate the Gods and subjugate Nature. But now the threat does not come from the divine or from Nature, but instead from a world made by Man that seems to be getting beyond his control. It would seem that the mega-machine can neither be dealt with at a religious level nor controlled scientifically.

We should consider that it is not just a question of a purely physical destruction of the planet, but rather the annihilation of life and consciousness. The annihilation of human consciousness is something close to the destruction of Being: if there no longer exists a bearer of consciousness, then conscious Being itself is lacking. Man has a responsibility toward reality. Putting one's blind trust in God is no longer convincing. And yet most religions clearly contain seminal elements that are sufficient to overcome this problem. The resurrection of the body, the human incarnation of God, the cohesion of the world (*lokasaṃgrahā*), the interconnection of reality (*pratītyasamutpāda*), the glory of the Creator, and others open up the possibility of practical and theoretical intervention. This all seems to be aiming at an elevation of Man's responsibility. Life depends on us too. We are ourselves the co-beings of Being. As our own private property we are nothing; as followers of another or as mere creatures we are nothing; but as components of reality we are indispensable; as Men we participate in the Trinitarian mystery, and our participation is not just passive. We also participate in the destiny of Being.

### SECTION III

## COSMOTHEANDRIC REALITY\*

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\* Original English version: *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 1–77; revised with *La Realtà cosmoteandrica. Dio-Uomo-Mondo*, Parts I and III (Milano: Jaca Book, 2004) [Part II in *Opera Omnia* vol. XI.]



## Part One

*COLLIGITE FRAGMENTA* FOR AN INTEGRATION OF REALITY



## INTRODUCTION

The mystery of transfiguration may serve as the symbol of this study.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is despised, nothing left over. Everything is integrated, assumed, transfigured. Nothing is postponed into the future: the whole presence is here—is present. Nothing is pushed aside or considered unredeemable, the entire body and all of human memory included. Transfiguration is not some vision of a more pleasant reality or mere escapism to a loftier plane. It is the totally integrated intuition of the seamless fabric of the entire reality: *the cosmotheandric vision*. To oversimplify, or, even worse, to eliminate or ignore what we cannot easily assimilate is a universal human temptation—and reductionism a common philosophical sin. Although civilizations have often tried to overcome one-sidedness and extremisms of all sorts in their attempts to piece together a habitable reality, each of them has had its share of inhuman ascetics, heartless sages, and otherworldly saints. By and large, focus and discernment have been achieved by leaving integral parts of reality out of the picture, even to the extent that what was saved, redeemed, or liberated was at times less appealing or less valuable than what was cast aside. One could find examples in every walk of life, from politics to science to academia, not to mention in the spiritual realm (which, as the name suggests, already assumes an unwarranted bias in favor of the spirit and opposed to matter).

The moment has surely come to begin gathering up the fragments, both of modern/Western culture, which excels at analysis and specialization, and of the diverse civilizations of the world, each of which harbors its own excellences and shortcomings. We cannot allow any religion, culture, or fragment of reality to be forgotten, neglected, or thrown away, if we are to achieve that total reconstruction of reality that has today become imperative.

This study is an essay toward such an integration of the whole of reality. We have to gather the scattered fragments, even if they are only crumbs.<sup>2</sup> We have to reconstruct the body of Prajāpati (the “Lord of creatures,” Father of the Gods and the Beings), even if some of the parts feel unworthy, are shy, or run away.<sup>3</sup> Put in a more philosophical way, we have to think of all the fragments of our present world in order to bring them together into a harmonious—though not monolithic—whole.<sup>4</sup>

This catholic (in the etymological sense of the term) vision does not mean a holistic vision of reality, that is, letting those who possess it rule the world, or be superior to the others, at least. It is not about a global system, but rather a personal synthesis that attains the *totum* in the concrete *pars* that we are.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mt 17:1–8, but also other texts from other traditions, e.g., *Krishna's apotheosis* in Book XI of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

<sup>2</sup> See Jn 7:12: “Colligite quae superaverunt fragmenta, ne pereant” [Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost] (AV).

<sup>3</sup> See the many different Vedic texts as reported, e.g., in chapter 4, “The Myth of Prajāpati,” of my book *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 65–95.

<sup>4</sup> See the traditional (since Augustine) etymology of *cogitare* (thinking) as *colligere* (to gather). The word also suggests drawing conclusions.



I am certainly not advocating a naive optimism here, as if evil did not exist, as if annihilation were not possible, as if harmony were always guaranteed. The integration remains an ideal; the reconstruction is still *in potentia*. But it is not up to us to sift and separate before the time is ripe.<sup>5</sup> At least a kind of total confidence should be ours.

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The numerous notes accompanying this study are intended to give readers the chance to delve more deeply into the topics covered.<sup>6</sup> We live in an age that is losing its historical memory as a result of an educational system, secondary and tertiary, that is focused mainly on the sciences and technology, and that therefore tends to cultivate a single kind of thinking. I believe that an antidote to the cultural crisis of our time can be offered by presenting a study that reminds us of the wealth of humanity's heritage and makes us aware of the fact that, despite the "novelty" of certain ideas, their author is not original, but takes a lead from the ancient, or rather "original," wisdom by drawing on the "origin." The frequent references to my own works are intended to avoid repetition and the development of arguments that have appeared previously.

I must admit that, despite the effort to express myself clearly, this work is not an easy read: it requires concentration, focus, and discipline. In the past, being a "reader," both in the church and in universities, required a particular form of initiation, because reading was considered an art and a science. This author would like to contribute to a democratization of culture, but not at the cost of rendering it banal. Reading a book is not like having a look at a newspaper: one cannot give in to the temptation of hurried reading. The notes, too, can serve a purpose by introducing the pauses necessary in order to assimilate the thoughts, while still maintaining a properly critical approach.

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<sup>5</sup> See Mt 13:24–40.

<sup>6</sup> To avoid too many notes, the texts are not given in the original language but only in English.

## A NEW VISION

*Sicut nullus potest videre pulchritudinem carminis,  
nisi aspectus eius feratur super totum versum;  
sic nullus videt pulchritudinem ordinis  
et regiminis universi, nisi eam totam speculetur.*

*Bonaventure*<sup>1</sup>

This study has the humble, and thus courageous, ambition of contributing to a radical re-orientation of contemporary Man by situating him in an open horizon, embracing the millennia of human experience crystallized in the different cultures of the world. It is a sin of pusillanimity to believe that Man has no memory beyond that of his individual history.<sup>2</sup> The very language we speak and the biology that sustains our lives manifest in a condensed way the experiences of innumerable generations. Today we are increasingly aware that only an *open horizon* offers a satisfying background for human understanding. On the other hand, all the good will, sincere desire, and acute intellect in the world cannot overcome our limited *human perspective*. Only a modicum of real water can allay—though not quench—the thirst for universality. Conscious of this situation, we would like to present a view of our present planetary condition. Obviously, many a particular wave must keep silent, if we wish to grasp the deep sound of the ocean.

These reflections still have to pass the test of time and the proof of critical evaluation. The author presents them as a working hypothesis and fervently hopes that the criticism they receive in this enterprise of detecting—and thus inspiring—the signs of the times will purify this theanthropocosmic vision from its inevitable defects. This book is an invitation to dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Breviloquium*, Prologus 2, ed. Quaracchi, V.204b. "Just as nobody can see the beauty of a poem, if their glare does not penetrate into the entire verse, so nobody can see the beauty of the order and structure of the universe without reflecting upon the wholeness of that beauty."

<sup>2</sup> Once and for all I state that for me the word "Man" means the androgynous Human being and not the male element that has hitherto monopolized it—although when using pronouns I follow common usage awaiting the *utrum*, the new gender that encompasses both masculine and feminine without reducing either to a nonhuman *ne-uter*. The solution is not juxtaposition but integration. For this reason I shall use "Man" when referring to the *anthropos* of the theanthropocosmic vision (God, Man, Universe), although for phonetic reasons I shall more often use the word "cosmotheandric," in which *aner*—as in many Greek texts—stands for *anthropos*, *homo*, not only "male." We must remember that many languages lack the genders, and anyway, where they exist, they are not to be confused with the sexes. In Italian, for instance, "la guardia" or "la sentinella" is not a woman.

<sup>3</sup> The main thrust of the second and third chapters was developed in my contribution to the Second

I have never managed to convince myself that the truth can be acquired by exclusion, or freedom by "decision"—that is, by excluding real and authentic portions of reality. I am persuaded of the fact that closed-circuit systems defeat their object and that synthesis need not be systematic. I could not devote myself solely to the study of the sciences, or to the heights of philosophical speculation at the expense of praxis; far less could I take refuge in theology as though the hidden place of God were not in everything that is.

In all, this vision remains but an imperfect glimpse of a radiant spark—a scintilla, a *Fünklein* about which others have said and will say the most stupendous things.

### The Open Horizon

Is it possible for our epoch to have a unified vision of reality? Can we afford to ignore the failures of so many philosophies and worldviews by continuing to insist on the need for synthesis? Can we further neglect the complementary fact that the great discoveries and advances of the past millennium seem to have been made by renouncing such philosophical dreams and concentrating on specialized areas of study? Does the socialization of humankind not demand that each of us mind his or her own business in order to contribute to the common welfare? In a word, is it not time to humbly and realistically resign ourselves to the "human condition" and give up the grand ideas defended, brandished by metaphysics and theologies of every sort? Should we not finally recognize that the wellsprings of human creativity are no longer the traditional fields of religion, theology, and philosophy?<sup>4</sup>

Is "philosophy" itself not striving to become a "positive science"?<sup>5</sup>

And in literature as well: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. . . ." <sup>6</sup> Is ours not, after all, the age of Science and Technology?<sup>7</sup>

And yet Man's innate thirst for unity and harmony can in no way be assuaged by the news that the old ideals of *hokmāh*, *sophia*, *jñāna*, *gnōsis*, and so on were mere dreams now debunked by analytic and positivistic "thinking";<sup>8</sup> that the Medieval ideal of *sapientia* is gone forever;<sup>9</sup> that

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International Symposium of Belief, "The Emerging Dimensions of the Religious Consciousness of Our Times," held in Vienna in January 1975, and can be read in the *Acts of the Symposium*. Similar ideas were also presented at the International Colloquium on "Ecological Anthropology from the Perspective of the Different Traditions of Mankind," held at St. George House, Windsor Castle, England, in April 1974, and in the Symposium on "Natur-Natürlichkeit-Naturverständnis" held in Kyoto in October 1974, sponsored by the Institute for Intercultural Research (Heidelberg), then summed up in "*Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality*," *Eigo* (1977): 19–91.

<sup>4</sup> Is this not one of the cathartic effects of a certain existentialism? It renounces "philosophical" and abstract generalizations for the sake of "concrete" existential situations.

<sup>5</sup> See the two enlightening volumes by Heinrich Rombach, *Substanz, System, Struktur* (Freiburg/München: K. Alber, 1965/1966), which carry the long and significant subtitle: *Die Ontologie des Funktionalismus und der philosophische Hintergrund der modernen Wissenschaft*. See also the chapter "Conocimiento científico y conocimiento filosófico," in my book *Ontonomia de la ciencia* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 86–127.

<sup>6</sup> W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming."

<sup>7</sup> See, as a single example, the collection of essays edited by H. Freyer, J. Ch. Papalekas, G. Weippert, *Technik im technischen Zeitalter* (Düsseldorf: J. Schilling, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> See also, as one instance among many, G. Marcel, *Les Hommes contre l'humain* (Paris: La Colombe, 1952). (In English: *Men against Humanity* [London: Harvill, 1952]).

<sup>9</sup> See, as a background, J. Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, 5th ed. (Paris: Desclée, 1946). Significantly enough, the three volumes of the modern *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Kösel, 1973–74), have in their 1,874 pages no entry on *Weisheit* (wisdom).

the Renaissance ideal of Man is a deleterious, utopian model;<sup>10</sup> that the European encyclopedic effort is a failed enterprise;<sup>11</sup> that to speak of the "barbarism of specialization" is an atavism,<sup>12</sup> and that the call for synthesis is pious wishful thinking.<sup>13</sup>

We are concerned here with the old and venerable polarity that seems to lie at the very beginning of human reflexive consciousness. The Greeks formulated it as the One and the Many: *hén kai pollá*.<sup>14</sup> The problem lies not in unity or plurality, but in that *kai* (and) that joins them, in their synthesis.<sup>15</sup> If we underscore unity (*heteronomy*), plurality—after having been reduced to something unreal—will ultimately rebel and assert its rights. If we underscore plurality (*autonomy*), the fight of all against all and the mutual destruction will issue. Is there any link between an ultimately rigid and deadly monism on the one hand, and an ultimately anarchic and equally fatal plurality on the other? At our present juncture in consciousness we cannot irresponsibly accept either of these two human experiences as a solution. We have lived through the consequences of both options long enough and intensively enough to put us on our guard, lest we make the same mistakes.<sup>16</sup> Is

<sup>10</sup> See a figure like Nicolas Cusanus, for instance, whose definitive critical edition by R. Klibansky et al. cannot be replaced: Nicolai de Cusa, *Opera Omnia*, iussu ed auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1970); see also E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969). The reader is advised to correct some of Cassirer's clichés in light of H. De Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole* (Paris: Aubier, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> See the recent volumes by Georges Gusdorf, *Dieu, la nature, l'homme au siècle des lumières* and *L'avènement des sciences humaines au siècle des lumières*.

<sup>12</sup> See the acute consideration of "La barbarie del 'especialismo,'" in José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (1930), *Obras Completas*, 6th ed. (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1966), 215–20. See also R. Buckminster Fuller:

Therefore in direct contradiction to present specialization  
all educational processes  
must henceforth commence  
at the most comprehensive level  
of mental preoccupation,  
and that level is the one  
that consists of the earnest attempt  
to embrace the whole eternally regenerative phenomenon  
scenario Universe.

"Intuition: Metaphysical Mosaic," in *Intuition* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 46. See also his monumental recent work in two volumes: *Synergetics & Synergetics 2: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking*, in collaboration with E. J. Applewhite (New York: Macmillan, 1975, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> See the first long study with which I debuted in the intellectual arena: "Visión de síntesis del universo," *Arbor* (Madrid) 1, no. 1 (1944), reprinted in my *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963), 9–60.

<sup>14</sup> See Plato, *Philebus* 15d, and also *Brhadārnyaka-upaniṣad* I.2.1ff. and *Chândogya-upaniṣad* VI.2.1ff. It would be possible to write a history of Western thought from Plato's *hén kai pollá* to Heidegger (1957).

<sup>15</sup> One could characterize the entire history of Western Christian theology as the desperate effort to "combine" apparently—and dialectically—incompatible extremes: one and three in Trinity, one and two in Christology, *Filiusque, simul iustus et peccator*, one and one in creation and beatific vision, etc.

<sup>16</sup> See the hopes of the classical writers: "History, the evidence of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, directress of life [*magistra vitae*], threshold of antiquity" (Cicero, *De Oratore* II.9 [36]); or again: "For who is ignorant that it is the first law in writing history, that the historian must not tell any falsehood, and the next, that he must be bold enough to tell the whole truth? Also, that there must be no suspicion of partiality in his writings, or of personal animosity? These fundamental rules are doubtless universally known" (ibid., II.115 [62–63]). Translation by J. S. Watson, *Cicero on Oratory and Orators* (Philadelphia: McKay, 1897). And Tacitus says, "The principal task in recording history

history *magistra vitae*, or merely the depressing chronicle of Man's stumblings?<sup>17</sup>

On the one hand, this striving for unity seems a constitutive part of being human. Nothing less than unity, nothing less than truth and goodness will satisfy Man. Intelligibility demands a reduction to *unity*, and love tends to *union*.<sup>18</sup> Neither duality nor plurality can ever be the ultimate solution, because by the very fact of their inherent multiplicity they allow for further questioning.<sup>19</sup> This thirst for unity is not only ontological and epistemological (unity of being, unity of intellection), it is also sociological and political (unity of humankind, unity of civilizations). Societies tend to unite and agglomerate; people have a tendency toward assimilation and socialization.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the failure of a unifying Science, Philosophy, or Religion, coupled with the all-too-vivid experience of fanaticism, dictatorship, and human exploitation of every kind in the name of *one* God, thought, empire, party, or system, of one truth or religion, are too painful, devastating, and recent for us not to be forever leery of unitarian visions and monolithic systems. Herein lies the power and appeal of liberal movements of every sort: they represent autonomous reactions against heteronomous attitudes. Nothing that stifles human freedom can endure or be called truly human.<sup>21</sup> Humanness demands the free fulfillment of Man. There is no justice if liberty is not respected.<sup>22</sup> But there is no freedom where justice is violated.<sup>23</sup> But justice implies a law, an order. Who has been empowered to fix it? And how

is this: to prevent virtuous acts from Being unknown, and that evil words and deeds should fear an infamous reputation with posterity" (*Annals* III.65).

<sup>17</sup> See the massive efforts of Arnold J. Toynbee in the eleventh volume of his work *A Study of History* (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), which attempts to construct a philosophical historiography that would give modern Man the proper perspective with which to grasp the tenor of the past. Or, as he begins one of his latest books, "The question of our human race's destiny does not always loom large in people's minds" (*Change and Habit: The Challenge of Our Time* [London: Oxford University Press, 1966], 3).

<sup>18</sup> See Dionys., *De Div. Nom.* IV.15 (PG 3.713): "Love must be conceived of as a uniting and commingling power," which Migne translates, "Amorema . . . in quamdam sive potestatem copulantem et commiscentem intelligamus" (PG 3.714); St. Thomas paraphrases it as, "Amor est vis unitiva et concretiva." See also R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), 249–71.

<sup>19</sup> See Plotinus, the last chapter of the final *Ennead* (VI.9.1), which bears the title *On the Good, or the One*, and begins with the fundamental sentence: "It is by the One that all Beings exist." Or better: "It is by virtue of unity that all beings are beings."

<sup>20</sup> The name of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin immediately comes to mind here. See his 1947 prologue to *Le phénomène humain* (Paris: Seuil, 1955), or his suggestive expression in a paper of 1952: "Un champ de sympathie à l'échelle planétaire," in *La vision du passé* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 378. Or again: "What will happen on the day when, in place of the impersonal Humanity put forward by modern social doctrines as the goal of human effort, we recognize the presence of a conscious Center of total convergence? At that time, the individuals caught up in the irresistible current of human totalization will feel themselves strengthened by the very movement which is bringing them closer together. The more they are grouped under a Personal, the more personal they will themselves become. And that effortlessly, by virtue of the properties of love." In "Human Energy," *Building the Earth* (New York: Dimension Books, 1969), 85.

<sup>21</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Hermeneutic of Religious Freedom: Religion as Freedom," *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, chapter 16, 418–60.

<sup>22</sup> This is an integral aspect of the "Theology of Liberation." See G. Gutiérrez in his *Teología de la Liberación. Perspectivas* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973). In English: *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973; rev. ed., 1988).

<sup>23</sup> See the opening paragraph of the Vatican II Declaration on Human Freedom (*Dignitatis humanae personae*) (1965): "A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man. And the demand is increasingly

can we recognize both the power and the law? No monistic system or uniform worldview will ever satisfy the inexhaustible versatility of Man, whose greatest dignity is inseparable from his or her freedom and personal uniqueness; furthermore, no liberalism can prevent the strongest party from misusing its power, nor can it ignore that evil also belongs to reality.

The dilemma can be terrifying:

- At the one extreme, anarchy, chaos, civil and civilizational strife, wars of parties, ideologies, and human groups of every sort, leading ultimately to mutual destruction or to the ever-transient victory of the strongest. Granted that this situation is not always visible in many a liberal ideology, but it is implicit and emerges the moment one pursues the logical consequences or when the underlying tensions come to the surface. Plurality is ultimately unstable.

- At the other extreme, the dictatorship of Big Brother—be he commissar, despot, president, religious figure, or economic reformer—with all the bureaucratic organs and structures to support “him.” Here again, the situation may not be patent at first sight, but it will inexorably appear the moment the mythical structures are called into question, that is, when fundamental decisions are no longer justified by commonly accepted myths. Monism is ultimately explosive.

After so many centuries of negative experiences in any field of life, the vision we suggest will necessarily be neither monist nor pluralist.

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Many have been sought. To begin with, the dilemma can be interpreted on several levels. The metaphysical problem is concerned with reconciling the One and the Many in the ultimate order of Being. The epistemological issue focuses on identity and difference. The scientific approach looks for the unity and coordination of the sciences. Sociology seeks patterns of knowledge, and politics tries to find practical ways of organizing human life on the whole planet. We are not going to pursue here this ultimate human problem of unity and multiplicity, identity and difference, plurality and pluralism. We would like to offer only a general typology applicable to the various levels, whether the problem at hand is the unity of Beings, religions, governments, or institutions.

A first way of solving the dilemma consists of not seeing the dilemma, that is, in either not grasping it at all or not admitting that a dilemma exists. It is the pragmatic attitude that sees no problem in the variety and mutual incompatibility of ultimate opinions, but merely a fact that does not call for further elucidation. There is no way to argue with ignorance, just as there is no way to defeat innocence—as long as they are just that. But once the question emerges, it must be faced up to: Man does not live up to the demands of his situation. He prefers instead to remain fluid, to cling to vague hopes or future expectations. This might indeed describe the case of many people, except on occasions of personal or historical crisis when they must face extreme situations.

There is a second way of escaping the dilemma. It consists in saying that the dilemma is theoretically insoluble, so that one rejects philosophy and all intellectual approaches in favor of a more concrete, day-to-day form of living, making the best of the given situation.

A third type of response denies that there is a real dilemma and then opts for one of its

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made that Men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is also made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations.” Translated in *The Documents of Vatican II*, W. M. Abbott, SJ (ed.) (New York: Corpus Books, 1966), 675.

horns as an alleged solution. Here again we have two possibilities. The one defends liberalism, dualism, and freedom as the practical solution to the dilemma. The other strives for order, justice, unity, and truth as the working solution for a viable human life.

If the first solution claims that the grapes are sour because we cannot reach them, the second one tries to prove that there are no grapes at all, and the third proclaims that the grapes are ripe in only one of the vineyards.

There is still another, fourth way, which is represented by most traditional religions at the popular level. It consists in the indefinite postponement of any solution in this world. Indeed, the delay in finding a solution in this "vale of tears" where all is *duḥkha*, *māyā*, *hamartia* (suffering, illusion, sin) can even be definitive because the *status deviationis* or *samsāric* condition of Man (the sinful or pilgrim state) is the only real one in this world—and thus the postponement is radical until we are *in patria* (the true and definitive Fatherland). Certainly supernatural heavens and futuristic ideologies have a positive cathartic effect, but only so long as people believe in them. Once such a belief is disappointed, an opposite reaction takes place, and so Man pendulates from extreme to extreme, in both personal and historical existence.<sup>24</sup> This is both the strength and weakness of any eschatological position. It offers an alibi for the *status deviationis* of the actual human condition: on the one hand, this makes existence a little more tolerable, but on the other, it may also paralyze every noble effort to better that same situation.<sup>25</sup> Why bother expending so much effort if we are not going to reach "the kingdom" after all, or if that kingdom is "not of this world"?

Now is not the time to discuss these theories. It is sufficient to observe that whatever the actual solution being proposed, as soon as the problem arises as such, it does require a solution, and one that need not necessarily be univocal but might be pluralistic and could distinguish between a *synthesis* that remains open and a complete, or at least complete-able, *system*.

In any case we need an open horizon,<sup>26</sup> and we need it even more today as our world, not only geographically but also historically, becomes the whole planet and technology aims to unify the means for dealing with our common human condition. In concrete terms, the need for a unified vision of reality is so much more urgent because many other unifying factors are already at work that could give rise to a partial unification but that ignore the fundamental ingredients of the human being and therefore do violence to reality.

To put it another way, any solution that does not somehow have a definitive character cannot satisfy Man; nothing except the Whole can be the final stage of his pilgrimage—mental, affective, and existential.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See the late Western Middle Ages as described by J. Huizinga: "So violent and motley was life, that it bore the mixed smell of blood and roses. The Men of that time always oscillate between the fear of hell and the most naive joy, between cruelty and tenderness, between harsh asceticism and insane attachment to the delights of this world, between hatred and goodness, always running to extremes" (*The Waning of the Middle Ages* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954], 27).

<sup>25</sup> See the critique of Karl Marx: "The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. . . . It is the task of history, therefore, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of this world" ("Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Karl Marx: *Early Writings*, translated and edited by T. B. Bortolomeo [New York: McGraw Hill, 1963], 43–44).

<sup>26</sup> See the recent efforts of a young scientist, de Rosnay (1975), who would introduce, in addition to the microscopic (infinitely small) and the telescopic (infinitely large), the macroscopic (infinitely complex) as a perspective on the complete human ecosystem. See also Morin (1973), with its extensive bibliography, and various articles by T. Berry (1972 and 1974) on universal spirituality.

<sup>27</sup> In T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" we find the lines "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time

But can we claim to be in a better position than our predecessors, who said so many things they considered important and definitive but that today we find completely superseded? After all, is not the "open horizon" a human perspective too?

Note that we have said "open horizon," and not "global perspective," as it is so often put nowadays. The ideal of a global perspective—with all the well-intentioned slogans ("Think globally, act locally,"<sup>28</sup> etc.)—is unconvincing on at least two grounds.

First, it is, strictly speaking, a contradiction in terms. There can be no perspective of 360 degrees, not even of 180. Any perspective is limited, and the Human being cannot have a global vision of anything. It would not only have to encompass contradictory visions but also exhaust the knowledge (vision) of the thing(s) in question. Both are impossible.

Second, enthusiasm for the global perspective appears to me as a vestige of the diarch imperialistic habit of presenting something that is believed to be really universal and for the benefit of all humanity. The danger here lies in uncritically extrapolating one's limited perspective into a global imperative that is supposed to suit everybody; the fit is never perfect, and the consequences can be devastating indeed. This attitude—often unwittingly—perpetuates the same old archetype of one truth, God, church, civilization, and so on, and today one technology and one economic market.

The open horizon, on the other hand, is meant to preserve the validity of this trend toward unity and universality, but without closing it up in any single perspective, vision, or system. We need a horizon in order to see and to understand, but we are aware that other people have other horizons; we aspire to embrace them, but we are aware of the ever-elusive character of any horizon and its constitutive openness.

We could propose a dual explanation: epistemological and philosophical. The epistemological hypothesis emphasizes that for millennia, notwithstanding some important ancient and modern exceptions, dominant cultures have always had the better of others because they have divided the knowledge of love. Love is relegated as a secondary function that is generally individualist and private. As we have mentioned, knowledge requires *unity*, while love needs *union*. Reducing everything to unity (unified system, globalization, etc.) eliminates love. Aiming for the union of opposites may be an unattainable utopia. The cosmotheandric vision is neither one nor the other. Its symbol is *harmony*, which destroys neither unity nor union but makes possible dynamic experience in an *advaita* or Trinitarian interrelation.<sup>29</sup>

The philosophical hypothesis could be reduced to the description of the meaning of one word: *advaita* (a-duality). We have said that the prevailing dilemma of the Western world is both monism (One) and dualism (One and Many). The a-dualist vision affirms: neither One nor Many, because reality does not answer to the needs of the mind and resolves the dilemma by negating it, because there is no One without Many or Many without One, since reality is pure relation and its characteristic is polarity, as we shall see later.

### The Human Perspective

This need of keeping our horizon open should be taken very seriously in order to avoid the common mistake of worshipping modernity, as if the latest discovery and the most recent study were the definitive ones, or at least truer than any previous ones, and so would offer a better basis for synthesis.<sup>30</sup> Here a double factor seems to play an essential role. On the one hand,

... / When the last of earth left to discover / Is that which was the beginning" (*Four Quartets*).

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., René Dubos, *Celebrations of Life* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1981), chap. 3, 83–127.

<sup>29</sup> See Panikkar (1998/xxiii).

<sup>30</sup> Somebody should have the wit to offer a sampler of thinkers repeating consciously or uncon-



once we have reached a certain degree or intellectual sophistication, we cannot renounce the universality that accrues to our opinions in the precise realm in which they claim to be true. This is a basic axiom of human thinking. It cannot be denied, for contradicting it would already require the very validity that it denies. Any statement is a true statement in so far as it claims to state a truth.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, however, we know that although no period in human history has had the "last" word, each word has a certain working validity in and for its own time.

- To posit  
     "A is B" (a)  
 amounts to affirming that  
     "A is B" is true  
     [or (a) is true] (b)  
 Now this latter statement implies a third one:  
     "A is B" is true forever (c),  
     [or (b) forever]  
 since on purely logical grounds,  
     (a) = (b) = (c).

If (c) were not the case, we could not know when and whether (b) is the case either. This means that as long as A remains A and B remains B, the equation (a) perdures. But there is no criterion in A or in B that guarantees that what we know as A and B will remain unchanged, be it in our perception of them or in the context that makes them what they are, namely, A to be A and B to be B. This means that (a) is equivalent to positing that  
     "A is B as long as A is A and B is B" (d).

But we do not know how long A and B will conserve their respective identities. In other words, the self-identity of A and B is a necessary postulate for logical thought, but it lacks any external guarantee. Will what we see today as

"A is B" (a)

remain so tomorrow? The statements (a), (b), and (c) are certainly valid, but none of them contains any guarantee that tomorrow they will still be valid. In other words:

(a) = (b) = (c) = (d)

amounts to saying that the time factor ("as long as") is implicit in any logical statement, and that a change in the temporal factor may destroy the logical statement.

Our problem is to know whether today's open horizon will not be merely another limited human perspective tomorrow. This is the well-known hermeneutical problem: the text is always a function of its context.<sup>32</sup> In what sense can we have universal statements if these depend on a particular context and we have no universal context?

sciously that "Today we know," "The last word in science is," "It was discovered just the other day," "The modern version of this is," "Today we have finally reached the conclusion," "Laboratory X or research at University Y has established that," "The latest book on the matter says" . . . Novelty is not only in fashion, the essence of knowledge today seems to be what is "news." And yet, speaking to his contemporaries, every author has to pay this tribute to the temporal myth.

<sup>31</sup> See the famous paradox of Epimenides the Cretan: "All Cretans are liars," which can be reduced to the sentence: "The statement that says this is false."

<sup>32</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Kleine Schriften* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), 1: 118.

To put it in our concrete terms: Does this mean that when we speak of the end of a period and of a certain global vision we are stumbling into the same pitfall as our predecessors? If I am saying, for instance, that we now have the possibility of a global vision and a holistic conception of reality, am I not a naive victim of the same mirage?

For this reason, a second degree of sophistication, as it were, is needed in order to escape the Scylla of agnosticism and avoid the Charybdis of dogmatism. Here I would distinguish between *relativism* and *relativity*, between an agnostic attitude that is intellectually paralyzed due to a fear of error and a relational awareness that understands that because all knowledge and even all Being is inter- and intra-related, nothing has meaning independent of a delimited context.<sup>33</sup>

No solution will be found, no convincing answer can be given until Man by himself discovers a myth, a horizon that satisfies his intellectual and emotional capacities. In other words, the presentation of a unifying paradigm, which is not at the same time a monolithic and closed system, seems to be of the utmost importance. These considerations form the overall background of the hypothesis I propose here. I am not presenting a system, that is, a systematic treatise regarding the situation of Man in the universe. I am offering a synthesis that not only remains open but that allows and even calls for differing interpretations.

Further, I suggest that this synthesis belongs to the order of myth, that it is not a vision of a vision, but merely a vision. The communication of a vision is not a showing (of pictures of reality), but a communion (in seeing the universe): a myth.<sup>34</sup>

This simple argument has a very important corollary: it makes us aware of the myth of conceptual knowledge as an appropriate instrument for "capturing reality." But what conceptual knowledge really knows is only the static aspect of reality. For us to say something permanently valid about A and B, they must be immutable; otherwise, we are not referring to the same things. The mutability of things belongs to our empirical experience of reality: things change. Those things that seemed good, fair, and just in the last century may not be perceived in the same way today. The great strategy of the mind is the invention, or the discovery (we shall not enter into that question), of the "essences" of things. Since essences are immutable, we can affirm something that is also valid for tomorrow. This undoubtedly ingenious discovery leads to the invention (or discovery) of the concept as a synonym for essence; the concept allows the most extraordinary operations of the mind. A paradigmatic example of this would be geometry: the true triangle does not exist, but from the concept of triangle the mind can deduce a series of properties that are then proved valid in their application to the real world. This is such an astonishing fact that from Plato onward the concept (of triangle in our example) was considered by many to be the true essence of all things, and thus the real world would be the world of essences—without entering here into the merits

<sup>33</sup> See the chapter "Pratityasamutpāda" in my *The Silence of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), now in *The Silence of Buddha*, Vol. V of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>34</sup> The word "myth" is used here in the sense explicated in my *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutic* (op. cit., 98–99), as the most basic horizon of intelligibility. Myth is what you believe in without believing that you believe in it: "The ultimate reference point, the touchstone of truth by which facts are recognized as truths. Myth, when it is believed and lived from inside, does not ask to be plumbed more deeply, i.e., to be transcended in the search for some ulterior ground; it asks only to be made more and more explicit, for it expresses the very foundation of our conviction of truth." See also Virginia Corwen, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven, 1960), 127ff., who gives the following comprehensive definition of myth (covering also Phil 2:6): "A statement of truth cast in dramatic form to suggest the dynamic inter-relations of the divine, the world and man." *Apud* R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 120 (footnote).

and demerits of idealism. The most extraordinary example of a conceptual world is modern science. Its success is so undeniable and so notable that the concept of "science" has exhausted virtually the whole semantic range of the word. In fact, science means knowledge, *gnôsis*, *jñāna*; but knowledge is not only, and not even primarily, conceptual knowledge. Alongside it there is also symbolic consciousness, which overcomes the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity.<sup>35</sup> Modern science has become an algebra of (abstract) concepts extracted from experiments and then applied to the behavior of measurable objects.

Without addressing this particular issue we can simply add that as well as the mutability of things there is also the mutability of the intellect. This third discovery, although it has precedents over many centuries in both West and East, is actually quite recent. There are more immediate precedents in the "sociology of knowledge,"<sup>36</sup> but a more complete description relies on a deeper reflection on symbolic consciousness. Only then, by overcoming the subject-object dichotomy, can we accept the mutability of the intellect—that is to say, its *relativity*—without falling into the rigid *relativism* that destroys itself in its very formulation. In our example, what seemed good, fair, and just in the last century, and that we no longer perceive as such, may have been so at the time because "good, fair, and just" are not (immutable) concepts but symbols that involve the object as much as the subject. Even truth is relational. When epistemology is separated from ontology—that is, when knowledge is unbound from Being and becomes an autonomous activity of the mind—truth becomes a concept and therefore immutable: otherwise we could not know anything beyond the act of knowing itself. Ontology, on the other hand, like the "*logos* of Being" (subjective genitive) cannot determine a priori what the word of Being is before it has heard it.

These considerations are necessary in order to frame the argument of this whole book.

### Summary

Let us now attempt a brief phenomenological summary, then a philosophical résumé, followed by an anthropological description, and completed by a mythical story.

#### *Phenomenological Summary*

When primal Man began his career on Earth as a Human being, he found the Gods already present. This seems to be an important, although often neglected, phenomenological *datum*. The Gods are older than and prior to Man—in Man's own consciousness. Primal Man was more convinced of the existence of the divine than of the human. And he had no doubt about the cosmos. The "primitive" Man pondered the Gods as he wondered about Nature and about himself. The three elements were all there. And then, as human consciousness commenced its long course of analysis and introspection, this undiscriminated whole began to break up.

With this, a second moment in human consciousness began to unfold: a great period of discernment and increasingly severed perspectives. The divine became more and more disentangled from the World, and Man emerges as an independent being who discovers and dissociates the separate forces and particular laws of the entire reality, and himself as a successively more individualized center of operations. It is a process of discrimination and individualization.

<sup>35</sup> See Panikkar (1981/9).

<sup>36</sup> See the pioneering work of Scheler (1924), 1–146.

But there is yet a third moment in human consciousness: it is the still unachieved conquest of a new innocence, the synthesis of an integral experience. The different spheres of being and the several forms of consciousness strive toward a complex unity; the dispersed pieces of the second moment are drawn toward reconstruction; Man's body becomes once again a constitutive part of himself, and the World reappears as the greater body in which Man is integrated. The human community becomes aware that it is more than either an undifferentiated mass or an agglomeration of alienated individuals. The vertical or divine dimension is no longer projected onto "another" being but experienced as the infinite dimension of reality itself. The ideal of this divine, human, and cosmic synergy has probably been present since the very emergence of consciousness, but it has been floating, in suspended animation as it were, and today it crystallizes in clearer and more coherent forms. There now seem to be signs of a real mutation in the overall dynamism of reality: a change in consciousness also implies a change in reality.

As we have said, this study draws on the last ten thousand years of human memory and would like to encompass the Eastern as well as the Western experience of Man. To understand modernity in the global context of human geography and history, we have to take into account the entire texture of human experience, even at the risk of minimizing particular details.

### *Philosophical Résumé*

A philosophical résumé would note that the first moment in human consciousness is dominated by the myth of cosmos, that is, by an all-pervading awareness of space. Reality is spatial, and the three worlds are viewed in spatial terms: the world beyond of the Gods; the in-between world of living beings, especially the humans; and the underworld below, where existence was different from the other two worlds. Nothing is real if it is not located somewhere in space. God, Man, and the World all are real since they all are located in space.

In the second moment, time predominates. Reality is mainly temporal, and the three worlds are the realms of past, present, and future. For some, God belongs mainly to the past; for others to the future; and for those called mystics, the divine is primordially present. Man also travels from one temporal world to another, and the cosmos reveals itself in "natural history." The myth of history is the dominant feature of this second moment. In epistemological terms, subject-object knowledge is the great achievement of this moment, for it is a temporal awareness that enables Man to discover that prior to knowledge of the (known) object he must take into account the structure of the (knowing) subject. This passage from the more spatial object to the more temporal subject can serve to schematize the main dynamism of this moment.

We cannot yet fully articulate the myth of the third moment, lest we destroy it. We could provisionally call it the *unifying myth* and note its thrust toward overcoming the epistemological subject-object dichotomy, and so also any metaphysical dualism. We could characterize this myth as the movement toward wholeness and the ideal of synthesis. The three worlds are no longer merely spatial or temporal; they tend to be the worlds of spirit, of life, and of matter: the divine, the human, and the cosmic realms that permeate all three temporal and spatial universes. Monisms and dualisms seem obsolete. Pluralism (which is not plurality) and various a-dualistic and trinitarian conceptions seem to be gaining momentum. Not only does the spatio-temporal field become unified, the temporal-eternal cleft also seems to be bridged in a *tempiternal* consciousness.

One could also use a more academic language and speak of three phases in the evolution of Man's consciousness or of philosophy itself: metaphysical philosophy, transcendental

philosophy, and an all-integrating "philosophy" that tries to overcome the apories characteristic of practically every critical philosophy by recognizing that the elements of the problem are not just two (subject-object, Man-World, idealism-realism, theory-praxis, concept-reality, intellect-will, etc.) but rather that the relationship between them forms the link that constitutes the trinitarian unity of the real. The vicious circle gives way to the vital circle.

### *Anthropological Description*

The anthropological approach of this essay tends to stress the multimillennial process through which Man seems to have passed. It would recall the apparently incontrovertible fact of a primal, diffuse, and undifferentiated consciousness. It would describe this unity in which Man once lived along with the complex, painful, but also wonderful process of discrimination, differentiation, alienation, and estrangement that Man has undergone as well. It would also describe the moment of Man's going out of it and suggest that the time has come for a going back in, for recollecting the fragments, for recovering the at-one-ment that has always beckoned as Man's ideal. Anthropology would also stress the philogenetic as well as the ontogenetic character of this process and suggest that the crisis of our times is tied up with the fact that the urge for unity is stronger than ever, while the loss of the way is as acute as ever. In other words, although we are convinced that the fragments have to be gathered up anew and put together in an organic and harmonic way, nobody seems to know how to do it. We know only that we distrust anybody who claims to have any kind of universal panacea. One thing should be clear, however: the synthesis cannot be merely intellectual. It must rather be a kind of reconstruction of the great *Puruṣa*, the primal Person.

### *A Mythical Story*

This mythical story is, significantly enough, one of the most universal myths of all times, East or West. For the purposes of this study, we offer as our paradigm a combination of the Semitic myth of Adam and the Indo-European story of Prajāpati.<sup>37</sup>

There it was: a happy beginning, a point alpha, an undiscriminated and mysterious source of everything. For whatever motives, or more properly without external motivation (for there is nothing else), the Abyss, the Beginning, the God, the Void, the Non-Being . . . stirred within and produced the Being, the World, light, creation, and at a certain moment, humans. There are, to be sure, important differences in these myths, but both agree that an undifferentiated Unity, a mysterious Principle, moved itself from solitude, freed itself from inactivity, created, produced, gave birth to existence, to time, space, and all that moves in between. There was, or rather there is, a first originating moment, a Source, a One, a God, a Matter, a Seed, a Person.

Now this Origin creates, produces, originates, and divides itself precisely because it does not want to be alone any longer. But this is possible only because it has become conscious of itself. This consciousness makes the Principle aware of itself, visible in its own reflection, as it were: real. It is a double movement—one in the womb of the Principle itself, and the other "toward" the outside, so to speak. God begets and creates; he dismembers himself and creates the World; the One becomes the hidden source and produces multiplicity. Out of this process comes Man. Hence Man has the same origin as the Cosmos, the same source, the very power of the divine that stirred at the beginning. The three coexist. "Before" creation,

<sup>37</sup> See Panikkar (2000/xxvii), 77–104.

the Creator was certainly not a creator; before the "many," the One was not even one. And yet this dynamism is only in one direction: the One is at the origin, is the Origin—but it is Origin only because it originates. In "itself," it is nothing. This Principle, therefore, had no beginning, because it is the Beginning of Time.

The fall may be this first moment itself or may come at a second stage. At any rate, there is a fall, and the result is the historical situation of Man, his real condition. There is in Man a thirst, an urge, a desire to be God, to reach the end, the goal (although many thinkers will say "to be like God," concerned not to "tarnish" the absoluteness of God or the identity of Man). There is in God an ardor and a love for Man and the World. Here again the movement is double: from below to the heights, from the World spurred on by Man to God, and from above into the abyss as well, from the One to the Many; and thus we find everywhere the reciprocal dynamism of sacrifice and sacrament. Ultimately, however, it all has the same Origin, everything is related, the entire universe is a family, a macro-organism; links of "blood," so to speak, enliven all that is. We are of the same race. We are the dismembered limbs of that Body. Our task (and our privilege) is to *re-member* the dis-membered Body, to make it whole, that is, to heal and to integrate all the *disiecta membra* of reality, scattered as they are through time and space. The energy for this "salvation" may come from many directions, but it has only one source. This is the adventure in which the whole reality takes part.

## THE THREE KAIROLOGICAL MOMENTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I submit that we can discover three fundamental human attitudes in the unfolding of consciousness, though I am aware of the reservations and the risks implied in this proposal of an all-embracing hypothesis. I call them kairological and not chronological moments, in order to stress their qualitative character.<sup>1</sup> The three kairological moments we are going to describe are neither merely chronological epochs, nor exclusively evolutionary stages in a linear model. Not only is each of these three moments present in the other two, but all three are compatible with more than one of the schemas proposed by scholars in the field.<sup>2</sup> This does not deny that there may be a chronological sequence of the three moments within a single culture, or that there are living civilizations spatially coexisting and yet temporally diachronical.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless these moments may be called *kairological* because they present a markedly temporal character and even a certain historical sequence, although they do not follow the sequential pattern of linear and quantifiable time logically or even dialectically.<sup>4</sup> The idea of kairological dynamism should not be confused with a linear conception of "progress" or a rigid notion of development or "evolution."<sup>5</sup> The movement of consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> I am fully aware that the Greek word *kairos* does not always mean what some modern theologians want or make it to mean, although it expresses a more qualitative aspect than *chronos*. For a criticism of the distinction in the New Testament, see J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM, 1962), 20–46. I could perhaps introduce here terms borrowed from the Indic tradition, but this may not be necessary if we keep in mind simply that time has both a sequential, more formal (chronological) character and a qualitative, more content-oriented (kairological) aspect. See Berciano (2001b).

<sup>2</sup> R. Bellah, for example, in his "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review* 29 (1964): 358–74, distinguishes five stages in the evolution of religion: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern, and modern.

<sup>3</sup> See the difficulties encountered and the cautions enjoined by Arnold Toynbee when trying to find the criteria for a "Comparative Study of Civilizations" and much more when trying to construct a "Survey of Civilizations" in his now classic *A Study of History*, op. cit. Chronological time is not enough.

<sup>4</sup> It is for me reassuring and for Eric Voegelin a proof of intellectual honesty that he has abandoned the temporal pattern with which he began his projected six volumes on *Order and History*. The leading thread of linear temporality broke after the third volume. The data collected and the insights won convinced the author of "the impossibility of aligning the empirical types in any time sequence at all that would permit the structures actually found to emerge from a history conceived as a 'course'" — as he states in the introduction to his fourth volume of this monumental study, *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 2.

<sup>5</sup> See C. Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1929); J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1955); and others.

is neither straightforward nor chronological, but rather spiral and kairological.<sup>6</sup> Reading the great works of antiquity, one cannot but wonder if we have made any headway at all. The Upanishads, the prophecies of Isaiah, the *Tao-te-Ching*, the *Confucian Four Books*, the *Dialogues* of Plato, the *Majjhima Nikāya*, and the Gospel narratives only serve to underscore this contention. Moreover, every student of history knows that the most apparently modern conceptions were often already held by people in ancient times. Well known is the sincere outburst of the elderly Goethe, who told Eckermann that if he had better understood what had been said before him, he would not have dared to add a single word.<sup>7</sup> *Nihil novum sub sole*<sup>8</sup> (Nothing new under the sun)—and yet these precious seeds, the fruit of exceptional personalities, grow and proliferate in many soils, so that what was once the exception, the peak experience of a certain epoch, becomes the commonplace of another.<sup>9</sup>

There is, however, another reason to repeat living truths again and again: because any sincere saying is a reenactment, which implies a certain novelty, at least temporally. It is a new assimilation of truths that can give life, if it is lived anew. Speaking and writing can thus be liturgical activities; they do not merely repeat, they re-create.

However this may be, we shall now attempt the risky task of sketching some lines of force and cultural vectors of this process.

1. There can be no a priori method in a research of this kind. The method derives from the subject matter under investigation, and this subject matter can be detected only if we apply a method able to detect and unveil the phenomenon in question. From this standpoint, the "pre-understanding," the "hermeneutical circle," and "methodology" in general are capital problems.
2. Ultimate speculation, unlike any other type of thinking, cannot borrow its method from somewhere outside—from, say, a mathematical procedure or an evolutionary scheme. It has no higher court of appeal and has to rely on itself. It can only try to become transparent to itself, that is, self-conscious and self-critical in the very process of adopting such an intrinsic mode of intelligibility. Otherwise it is only applied science and not basic research.
3. A (holistic) reflection about the whole, further, leaves no room for anything outside itself, not only methodically, but also as regards the very subject matter under

<sup>6</sup> See the similar expression of *Kairologie* used by R. Guardini to express the importance of every human moment between Beginning (*Archäologie*) and End (*Eschatologie*), in *Die letzten Dinge* (Würzburg: Werkbind-Verlag, 1940), introduction (n.p.). There is an English translation by C. E. Forsythe and G. B. Branham, *The Last Things* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> "Tout ce qui mériterait d'être dit . . . a été proclamé et répété mille fois au long des siècles qui nous ont précédés" (G. Thibon, *L'ignorance étoilée* [Paris: Fayard, 1974], ix), who also reports the words of Goethe.

<sup>8</sup> See Ecclesiastes 1:9.

<sup>9</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, for example, refined the principle of linear perspective in painting to a degree unparalleled in his own time, or I daresay since. His vision so conditioned the vision of subsequent centuries that today his paintings appear almost too normal. They have become common coin. The average museum-goer finds little remarkable about them but their reputation. Another case in point is the well-known story about the naive English student who asked his professor why Shakespeare used so many clichés. The vision of the masters is always ordinary in this double sense: it ordains, it ordains the way people see things to such an extent that it inevitably falls into the banal ordinariness of cliché and can be retrieved—if at all—only by dint of extraordinary effort or intuition. See my article "Common Patterns of Eastern and Western Scholasticism," *Diogenes* 83 (1973): 103–13.



scrutiny. If we speak of growth, for example, we cannot assume a preexisting pattern for it. If we speak of an unfolding of moments, we cannot presume that they follow a prescribed law or obey some "higher" authority.

4. The ultimate basis for the method will have to be the very reality that the method helps to disclose. There is no awareness without presuppositions and assumptions. The latter are the conscious starting points of which a critical investigation is aware, and which it "assumes" in order to proceed further. The former are, by definition, presupposed (pre-sub-posed), that is, they are the very ground one takes for granted and upon which the assumptions rest without one being aware of them. Only another can detect our presuppositions. We can then either accept them—and by so doing transform them into assumptions—or reject them, that is, change them.
5. We have tried to limit our assumptions to a minimum, following the general law of the economy of "Beings": *Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate* (Beings must not be multiplied without a need to do so). We may reach this minimum if we try to speak in a language that makes sense for as many philosophical systems and languages as feasible. Moreover, whenever possible, the language here is used in a formal way so that the words may be interpreted variously—by *sōteria*, but also by all of its homeomorphic equivalents, such as *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, liberation, peace, and any other concept signifying that which a certain system of thought calls "salvation."
6. In addition to unconscious presuppositions, our assumptions are purposely drawn from contemporary consciousness, to the extent that I am able to share in that consciousness and know its assumptions. This means that although I am conditioned by time, space, language, and tradition, I am not directly influenced by a particular school of thought or a single religion.

Now, applying these principles, the main assumption of our research consists in the willingness to address ourselves to the total human situation, utilizing the means that the situation itself provides. In other words, we do not rely on the correctness of some external theory; the explanation has to be, so to speak, self-explanatory. This means that we have to use today's living myths as reference points and as our horizon of intelligibility without trying to justify them, which further implies that we have recourse to what is immediately given us, namely our consciousness.

Philosophies and theologies of history, sociologies, and sciences of religion as well as anthropologies and psychologies of every kind have dealt with the problem of trying to see a certain order in the evolution of Man's consciousness on Earth. Many thinkers have proposed various schemes with all their incumbent periods, divisions, phases, and so on. To enumerate them would itself require an entire essay.<sup>10</sup> If our tripartite division has any special merit, it is that it perhaps sums up, and in a way reflects and expresses, many of these more elaborated and perfected schemes, but with fewer assumptions and a wider range of data than hitherto available. In a certain sense my strength lies in the fact that, even though I rely on the work

<sup>10</sup> To give but a few of the most common names: G. B. Vico, *La scienza nuova*, 2 vols. (1744; Milan: Rizzoli, 1963); J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791) (Darmstadt: Metzler, 1966); A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, 6 vols. (1830; Paris: Costes, 1908–1934), esp. V: *La partie historique de la philosophie sociale*; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (1837; Leipzig: Reclam, 1907), and others. See also the theory of the three ages, viz., of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, proposed by Joachim de Fiore in his *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (or *Apocalypsis nova*) and the six *aetates* considered by Augustine, e.g., in *De Genesi ad litt.* XII (PL 34.253ff.), *De Genesi Cont. Manich.* I.23.41 (PL 34.93), *Confess.* XII.8.8 (PL 32.829), etc.

of others, the overall insight is rather the fruit of a vision, more an experience than the conclusion of a mental exercise. This may perhaps also explain why the intuition described here is not limited to history or to Man but tries to encompass the entire scope of the real.

### The Ecumenic Moment

Much has been written about primordial Man (I suggest avoiding "primitive," for reasons I am about to give). Numerous studies of every kind—anthropological, historical, psychological, and sociological—tend today toward a healthy balance between the extreme conceptions which would make of primordial Man either an inferior branch of *Homo sapiens* or the purest example of humanness. In the former case, it is maintained that only culture makes Man human; in the latter case, that civilization is a disease. A healthy balance will not overlook differences, but will not break continuity either.

Moreover, we must somehow be able to appropriate and even integrate this primordial mentality in ourselves. To put it another way, if there is no continuity between primal Man and Man today—that is, if there is not, so to speak, a primordial humanity still alive in each of us—then there is no way for us to really understand our forebears, or ourselves.<sup>11</sup>

The ecumenic age is a period we might title "Man of Nature." Here Nature is the *oikos*, the house, the *habitat* of Man.<sup>12</sup> Here the divine is subsumed in Nature, which is not merely "natural" but sacred, and ultimately one with the divine.<sup>13</sup> This is what historians sometimes call the agricultural period. The entire World is Man's habitat; he lives on and cultivates the earth. He has no "sense" of Nature, for he is part of it. He does not feel the need to contemplate Nature, since he himself belongs to it. He hunts, fishes, and toils upon the earth as much as he procreates and wages war on it. He is neither a spectator nor an actor on Earth, but its "natural" product. He too is sacred, for the entire universe is sacred, and he is a part of the whole. Communion with reality is coextensive here with the absence of a separating and reflective self-consciousness.

Certainly Man is conscious of Nature, just as he is aware of himself; he distinguishes himself more and more from Nature, but without separating himself from her. And this accounts for Man's peculiar relationship with the natural world during this period: Nature inspires

<sup>11</sup> See the telling remarks of M. Eliade: "It seems to me difficult to believe that, living in a historical moment like ours, the historians of religions will not take account of the creative possibilities of their discipline. How to assimilate culturally the spiritual universes that Africa, Oceania, South-East Asia open to us? All these spiritual universes have a religious origin and structure. If one does not approach them in the perspective of the history of religions, they will disappear as spiritual universes; they will be reduced to facts about social organizations, economic regimes, epochs or pre-colonial and colonial history, etc. In other words, they will not be grasped as spiritual creations; they will not enrich Western and world culture—they will serve to augment the number, already terrifying, of documents classified in archives, awaiting electronic computers to take them in charge" (*The Quest* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969], 70–71).

<sup>12</sup> Nature is his *viś* (in Sanskrit), his house. Man is *viśpati*, the householder (see *veśah*, *vicinus*, neighbor, and *vicus*, group of houses).

<sup>13</sup> See A. Toynbee saying that "The earliest recorded kind of religion consists of myths about non-human Nature" (*A Study of History*, rev. and abridged ed. by the author and J. Caplan [London: Oxford University Press, 1972], 344), where it is also suggested that now Nature has ceased to be religious because "by means of technology" Man explores Nature scientifically instead of "guessing" it mythically: "However, Man had already won his decisive victory over non-human Nature toward the close of the fourth millennium B.C., when he succeeded in regulating the waters of the Lower Tigris–Euphrates basin and the Lower Nile Basin." At first the divine was "mixed" with Nature. Later the divine has been "experienced" alone and, later still, in Man. Now it is time for the synthesis.

awe, elicits worship, needs to be propitiated; she is often considered to be the superior term of a personal relationship. Here personification and divinization generally go hand in hand. Man dwells in the midst of all the natural and divine forces of the universe. Nature engenders Gods, people, living Beings, and all sorts of things. She is the great begetter. She is *natura naturans* as much as *naturata*. For the Greeks, *physis* is the dynamic principle of everything.<sup>14</sup>

Man's relationship to Nature here is not essentially different from his relationship to his fellow Beings. Nature and Culture are not two segregated entities; much less are they dialectically opposed. The Chinese, Roman, and German laws, for example, consider many crimes against "things" on the same level as those committed against people; and many another juridical system punishes "things" as Human beings. This vision of reality is *cosmocentric*. The Earth is the center of the universe, and human religiousness is fundamentally chthonic.

This cosmocentric consciousness need not be interpreted as just a primitive belief. Many "sophisticated" civilizations share the same cosmic feeling. I am not thinking here only, or even mainly, of the pre-Socratic conviction that the world was sacred and thus "full of Gods."<sup>15</sup> Rather, there is also the conviction—which persists in the Western world well after Isaac Newton, and in other worldviews right up to the present day<sup>16</sup>—that the entire cosmos is a living organism: in the words of a modern and yet traditional theologian, a *macranthropos*.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Pico della Mirandola uses this very expression,<sup>18</sup> which is obviously connected with the biblical idea of Adam as representative of the whole universe,<sup>19</sup> and yet is different from a merely materialistic understanding of the relation between Man and World.<sup>20</sup> This conviction finds its counterpart in the notion of Man as the microcosm.<sup>21</sup> The idea is not only a Greek intuition, in spite of the Greek name, but also

<sup>14</sup> See R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), 23ff.

<sup>15</sup> The entire passage reads, "Certain thinkers say that the soul is intermingled in the whole universe, and it is perhaps for that reason that Thales came to the opinion that all things are full of Gods" (Aristotle, *De anima* I.5 [441a8–9]. J. A. Smith, trans., R. McKeon, ed. Great Books Edition [Chicago: Benton, 1952]). See a related passage in *Metaphysics* I.3 (938b20ff.) where Aristotle elaborates on Thales's first principle, and the insightful comments of E. Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), in his first chapter, "God and Greek Philosophy." See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* VII.6 (PL 41.199) reporting Varro's opinion that the four parts of the entire universe—ether, air, water, earth—are all "full of souls."

<sup>16</sup> See, as a single example, the fascinating account by Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (New York: Harper, 1957), who, describing the "crisis of European consciousness" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reduces it to the "destruction of the cosmos" (from a finite and well-ordered whole to an indefinite and even infinite universe) and "the geometrization of space" (from the Aristotelian inner-worldly places to an Euclidian infinite and homogeneous extension).

<sup>17</sup> "Le monde, dirait-on, fait un tout, un ensemble, et cet ensemble est humain—il est un 'macranthropos'" (E. Mersch, *Le Christ, l'homme et l'univers* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962], 13). Not without reason, the great theologian of the Mystical Body stresses this idea throughout the book, which has as its subtitle: *Prolegomenes à la théologie du corps mystique*.

<sup>18</sup> "Advertendum vocari a Mose mundum hominem magnum. Nam si homo est parvus mundus, utique mundus est magnus homo, etc. Videtis quam apte omnes hac mundi partes et hominis congruent" *Heptaplus*, in fine (*apud* H. de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole* [Paris: Aubier, 1974], 163).

<sup>19</sup> See Augustine, *In Psalm*. XCV.15 and secondary literature by de Lubac, *op. cit.*, 161.

<sup>20</sup> See Macrobius's *Scipion's Dream* II.12: "Physici [...] hominem brevem mundum esse dixerunt" (ed. Teubner [Lipsiae, 1868], 614 (*apud* de Lubac, *op. cit.*, 167)).

<sup>21</sup> See the common belief of the Scholastic tradition reflected in the following texts: "Et propter hoc homo dicitur minor mundus, quia omnes creaturae mundi quodammodo inveniuntur in eo" [And it is proper that Man is called a little world, because all creatures of the world are in a way to be found in him]. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* I, q.91, a.1. The *dicitur* refers to *Arist. Phys.* VIII.2 where

a post-Hellenic and Christian one. The symbol may be in the grammar itself: from *mikros kosmos* to *microcosmos*.<sup>22</sup> Yet there are two moments in the idea of Man as microcosm: an immanent one and a transcendent one. The former, asserting that Man is nothing but a mixture of the four elements, is criticized by Gregory of Nyssa<sup>23</sup> and approved by Duns Scotus.<sup>24</sup> The latter is accepted by the Christian patristics, Scholasticism, and the Renaissance in an overwhelming consensus.<sup>25</sup>

The conception of Man as microcosm is furthermore strengthened by the Vedic notion of Man as a representative of the entire reality: the primordial *Puruṣa* (Man) is "this whole, what was and what will be."<sup>26</sup> The *humanum* is the center of reality, the cosmos is anthropomorphic, and the Gods are involved in this same adventure. This leads to the idea of the entire universe as a living Being.

The idea is a familiar one since Plato,<sup>27</sup> and takes on added trenchancy in the Christian world. Origen considered it probable,<sup>28</sup> and Augustine did not refute it.<sup>29</sup> Later, in different

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"the Philosopher," arguing for the thesis that "never was a time when there was not motion, and never will be a time when there will not be motion" (252b6), says, "Now if this can occur in an animal, why should not the same be true also of the universe as a whole? If it can occur in a small world it could also occur in a great one: and if it can occur in the world, it could also occur in the infinite" (256b25–29).

<sup>22</sup> See de Lubac, op. cit., 160ff., giving references to Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Philo, Isidorus, the Scholastics up to Cusanus, Luis de León, and Calvin.

<sup>23</sup> *De hominis creatone* XVI.3 (See Laplace, SC VI.151ff.).

<sup>24</sup> *De divisione naturae* IV.12 (PL 122.793ff.).

<sup>25</sup> See De Lubac, op. cit., 160–69, for pertinent references and enlightening commentary.

<sup>26</sup> *RI* X.90.2. See a comment in Panikkar (2001/ xxv), 98–103.

<sup>27</sup> See the *locus classicus*, Timaeus 33ff. and also 896ff.

<sup>28</sup> "Although therefore the whole world is arranged in diverse parts and functions, we must not suppose that its condition is one of discord and self-contradiction; but as our 'one body' is composed of 'many members' (see 1 Cor 12:12) and is held together by one soul, so we should, I think, accept the opinion that the universe is as it were an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason of God as by one soul. This truth is, I believe, referred to by holy scripture in the following passage spoken through the prophet. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?' [Jer 23:24]. And again, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is the footstool of my feet' [Is 66:1]; and in what the Savior said, when he tells us not to swear, 'neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, neither by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet' [Mt 5:34 ff.]; and further, in what St. Paul says in his oration to the Athenians, 'in him we live and move and have our Being' [Acts 17:28]. For how do we 'live and move and have our Being in God' except through the fact that he binds and holds together the universe by his power? And how is heaven the 'throne of God' and earth the 'footstool of his feet,' as the Savior himself declares, except through the fact that alike in heaven and in earth God's power fills all things, as he says, 'Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?' [Jer 23:24]. I do not think, therefore, that anyone will find it difficult to admit, from the passages we have quoted, that God, the parent of all things, fills and holds together the entire universe with the fullness of his power" (Origen, *On First Principles* II, c. 1, 3a. translated by G.W. Butterworth [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966], 78).

<sup>29</sup> See *De Genesi ad litteram*, 17 (PL 34.226–27): "Potest autem et aliter intelligi, ut spiritum Dei, vitalem creaturam, qua universis iste visibilis mundus atque omnia corporea continentur et moventur, intelligamus; cui Deus omnipotens tribuit vim quamdam sibi serviendi ad operandum in iis quae gignuntur. Qui spiritus cum sit omni corpore aethereo melior, quia omnem visibilem creaturam omnis invisibilis creatura antecedit, non absurde spiritus Dei dicitur. Quid enim non est Dei ex iis quae condidit, cum etiam de ipsa terra dictum sit, Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus (Psal., 23.1); et illud universali complexione quod scriptum est, Quoniam tua sunt omnia, Domine, qui animas amas (Sap. 11.27)? Sed tunc potest iste spiritus sic intelligi, si quod dictum est, In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram, tantum de visibili creatura dictum sentiamus; ut super materiam rerum visibilium in exordio fabricationis earum superferretur invisibilis spiritus, qui tamen etiam ipse creatura esset, id est non Deus,

forms, it became Scholastic<sup>30</sup> and modern.<sup>31</sup> Only when the world-soul was identified with either God or the Holy Spirit<sup>32</sup> did the Christian church condemn the notion.<sup>33</sup>

Modern Man tends to forget this vision common to ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Man, a vision of the entire universe as a living reality in which angels moved the planets, demons stalked to and fro, and spirits of every kind populated the cosmic spheres.<sup>34</sup> Philosophers and theologians alike, however, took care to distinguish the formal or material principle of the World from God, lest he be degraded to a merely intramundane reality. Nevertheless, there was a consensus that a certain unifying principle intrinsic to the universe made it a unity and in a certain sense a worthy partner for Man. Significant in this respect is the pun of Methodius of Olympia, playing with the double meaning of *cosmos* as jewel and world. Man is, he says, *ho kōsmos tou kōsmou* (the glory [*diadem*] of the world).<sup>35</sup> It is another way of setting forth the traditional idea of Man as the *magnum miraculum*.<sup>36</sup>

sed a Deo facta atque instituta natura. Si autem universae creaturae, id est intellectualis et animalis et corporalis, materia creditur illo aquae vocabulo enuntiata, nullo modo hoc loco Spiritus Dei potest nisi ille incommutabilis et Sanctus intelligi, qui ferebatur super materiam omnium rerum quas fecit et condidit Deus." Or again: "Tertia opinio de hoc spiritus oriri potest, ut credatur spiritus nomine, aeris elementum enuntiatum; ut ita quatuor elementa insinuata sint, quibus mundus iste visibilis surgit; coelum scilicet, et terra, et aqua, et aer: non quia iam erant distincta et ordinata: sed quia in illius materiae quamvis informi confusione, tamen exortura praesignabantur, quae informis confusio tenebrarum et abyssi nomine commendata est. Sed quaelibet sententiarum istarum vera sit, omnium rerum quae ortae sunt, quae videntur, et quae non videntur, non quantum ad vitia quae contra naturam sunt, sed quantum ad ipsas naturas attinet, Deum esse auctorem et conditorem credendum est; nullamque omnino esse creaturam, quae non ab ipso initium perfectionemque habeat generis et substantiae suae" (ibid., 18 [PL 34.227]). Or again: *De consensu evangelistarum* I.35 (PL 34.1058); and also *Retractiones* I.5.3 (PL 32.591) and I.11.4 (PL 32, 601–2); *De civitate Dei* VI. 6 (PL 41.199), etc.

<sup>30</sup> An interesting argument is developed by Thomas Aquinas in accepting the thesis that God moves the world as the soul moves the body, following the common Christian tradition. See Albert. Mg., *Summa de creaturis* II, q.3, a.1, and Bonaventura, *In III Sent.* dist.2, a.1, q.2. Both quote what they think is the Augustinian saying: "Ita est anima in suo corpore, sicut Deus est in mundo," although in fact the words are those of Alcherus Claravallensis, *De Spiritu et Anima*, c. 35 (PL 40.805). Thomas puts the objection: "Præterea, homo dicitur minor mundus, quia sic est anima in corpore, sicut Deus in mundo," and he concedes that "similitudo attenditur quantum ad aliquid: quia scilicet, sicut Deus movet mundum, ita anima movet corpus. Non autem quantum ad omnia: non enim anima creavit corpus ex nihilo, sicut Deus mundum" (*Sum. theol.* I-II, q.17, a.8, ad 2).

<sup>31</sup> See the monumental work of P. Duhem, *Le système du monde; histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, 10 vols. (1913; Paris: Hennann, 1954–1959).

<sup>32</sup> See the Council of Sens (1140) condemning the error attributed to Peter Abelard: "Quod Spiritus Sanctus sit anima mundi." See Denz.-Schön. 722.

<sup>33</sup> We have in mind here, among others, the ideas of Scotus Eriugena, Averroes, Avicenna, Siger of Brabant.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the assertion of Albertus Mg. (*Summa de creaturis* I, tract.III, q.16, a.2): "We confess with the sacred writers that the heavens have not souls and are not animals if the word soul is taken in its strict sense. But if we wish to bring the scientists [*philosophos*] into agreement with the sacred writers, we can say that there are certain Intelligences in the spheres . . . and they are called the souls of the spheres . . . but they are not related to the spheres in that mode which justifies us in calling the (human) soul the entelechy of the body. We have spoken according to the scientists, who contradict the sacred writers only in name." Thomas agrees (*Sum. theol.* I, q.70, a.3). See C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), for a true Medieval vision. See Dante, *Divina Commedia* throughout, e.g., *Inferno* VII.73ff.; *Paradiso* II.

<sup>35</sup> *De resurrectione*, I.35 (apud De Lubac, op. cit., 163).

<sup>36</sup> The quotation from Mercurius referring to Man as "magnum miraculum" was a commonplace

And yet such a notion does not destroy the hierarchical conception of the universe.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, it reinforces the hierarchy by locating Man, as well as all superior and inferior Beings, in their proper places. Nor does it deny that Man has a special role to play and a unique mission to fulfill. Here the Old Testament idea of Man dominating and cultivating the earth<sup>38</sup> is complemented by the New Covenant notion of Man collaborating with Christ in the redemption of the World.<sup>39</sup> Now, instead of dwelling on these historical hypotheses,<sup>40</sup> we shall hazard only one further consideration.

As is usually the case, the grain and the weeds grow up together. Only the overzealous do not have the necessary patience—tolerance<sup>41</sup>—to wait for the right time in order to discern reality.<sup>42</sup> In this case, the “grain” is the positive (and once so familiar) idea of the *anima mundi*,<sup>43</sup> that is, the conviction addressed above that the universe is a living organism and that we “mortals” share in the destiny of this cosmos, that our life participates in this universal illumination,<sup>44</sup>

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in the Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* X.12, and other “auctoritates” cited by De Lubac, *op. cit.*, 161ff.

<sup>37</sup> See the significant text of Saint Thomas which sums up the common mentality of the times: “Ex omnibus autem his . . . colligere possumus quod . . . Deus omnia per se ipsum disponit; unde super illud: Quem posuit alium super orbem, quem fabricatus est? (Job 24:13) dicit Gregorius: mundum quippe per se ipsum regit qui per se ipsum condidit, et Boetius: Deus per se solum cuncta disponit. Sed, quantum ad executionem, inferiora per superiora dispensat, corporalia quidem per spiritualia; unde Gregorius dicit: In hoc mundo visibili nihil nisi per invisibilem creaturam disponi potest; inferiores vero spiritus per superiores; unde dicit Dionysius quod caelestes essentiae intellectuales primo in se ipsas divinam edunt illuminationem, et in nos deferunt quae supra nos sunt manifestationes, inferiora cetera corpora per superiora; unde dicit Dionysius quod sol ad generationem visibilium corporum confert et ad vitam ipsam movet . . . De his autem omnibus simul dicit Augustinus: Quemadmodum corpora grossiora et inferiora per subtiliora et potentiora quodam ordine reguntur, ita omnia corpora per spiritum vitae rationalem, et spiritus rationalis peccator per spiritum rationalem justum” (*C. Gentes* III.83). See a further commentary on this underlying idea of cosmic order in my work, *El concepto*, *op. cit.*, 238–48.

<sup>38</sup> See Gen 1:28.

<sup>39</sup> See 1 Cor 3:9: “We are God’s fellow-workers” (*synergoi*).

<sup>40</sup> For a good introductory discussion, see the chapters by L. White Jr., R. Dubos, H. P. Santmire, G. Fackre et al. in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, edited by I. G. Barbour (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1973).

<sup>41</sup> See Lk 21:19: “By your endurance [*patientia*] you will gain your lives.” *Hypomone* means tolerance, patience, as well as endurance, strength, perseverance. See my essay “Pluralismus, Toleranz und Christenheit,” in *Pluralismus, Toleranz und Christenheit* (Nürnberg: Abendländische Akademie, 1961), 117–42.

<sup>42</sup> See Mt 13:24–30 and Sir 1:37: “A patient Man will endure until / the right moment, / and then joy will burst forth for him.”

<sup>43</sup> See Schlette (1993).

<sup>44</sup> See Augustine: “Deus intelligibilis lux, in quo et a quo et per quem intelligibiter lucent, quae intelligibiter lucent omnis” (*Soliloq.* I.1.n3 [PL 32.870]). “Oh God, Intelligible Light, in Whom and by Whom and through Whom all those things which have intelligible light have their intelligible light” (trans. Thomas F. Gilligan, *The Soliloquies of St. Augustine* [New York: Cosmopolitan Science & Art Service Co., 1943]). Or again, “Cum vero de his agitur, quae mente conspicimus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur, quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce veritatis, qua ipse, qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et fruitur; sed tum quoque noster auditor, si et ipse illa secreta ac simplici oculo videt, novit quod dico sua contemplatione, non verbis meis. Ergo ne hunc quidem doceo vera dicens vera intuentem; docetur enim non verbis meis, sed ipsis rebus Deo intus pendente manifestis.” *De magistro* XII.40 (PL 32.1217); see also “*De ideis*,” No. 2, *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII, q.46 (PL 40.30); St. Thomas, *Sum. theol.* I, q.84, a.5, q.88, ad 3.

that we are sparks of the Light that enlightens every Man coming into this world<sup>45</sup> and that appears in its Taboric splendor only on rare occasions.<sup>46</sup> Life is solidarity, we are all involved in the happenings of the universe, and every action has universal repercussions.<sup>47</sup> Man is not isolated; even when he craves solitude, it is only in order to reestablish his proper bond with the whole, which might have been dislocated by disorderly affections or disrupted by entanglement in merely partial aspects of creation.<sup>48</sup>

The negative and disturbing element (the "weeds") is in this case the notion that this soul is God, a notion that not only stifles the independence and transcendence of God—making God totally this-worldly—but also stunts any open possibilities for the World to develop and evolve along new and uncharted pathways, instead of allowing the World to run the risk of creatureliness. If the World comes "out of nothing," all possibilities are open to it, including that of returning to nothingness.<sup>49</sup> Further, if God is the world-soul, human freedom is a fallacy, for Man could not then go his own way but would be moved only by the World's immanent soul. To be sure, all this implies a particular idea of the Divinity, but it is precisely this idea that dominated that era when the myth of the *anima mundi* flourished. It was the "dangerous" identification of God and the world-soul that harmed both notions. Ultimately, it led to admitting a plurality of world-souls, and yet the inherent hierarchical structure of these multiple souls made a highest principle unavoidable: a soul of (the) souls.<sup>50</sup>

It marked an unfortunate moment in human development—and the New Science, in the fervor of its honeymoon period in Western history, dismissed all this as primitive animism or mere remnants of an obsolete worldview. Instead of growth and continuity, the mathematicization of the world fostered a rupture, whose consequences we are only now beginning to see and to pay.

And yet, however this process may vary in details from culture to culture, Man has lived and still lives in communion with Nature in a way that may sound strange to technologized city dwellers: the non-urbanized are not estranged from Nature but are its blood relatives, so to speak. Only with the predominance of the quantitative worldview brought about by the so-called natural sciences does this estrangement appear and become a commonplace of contemporary experience.<sup>51</sup> This is what we shall describe below.

<sup>45</sup> Job 1:4.

<sup>46</sup> See Mk 9:2–8.

<sup>47</sup> This is the main intuition of the theory of *karma*. See R. Panikkar, "The Law of Karma, and the Historical Dimension of Man," *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, op. cit., chap. 14, 361–88.

<sup>48</sup> See Pierre Rousselot, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Âge (Baumker-Deitriège)* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung, 1908), VI.

<sup>49</sup> We hardly need to remind the reader that this notion of *creatio ex nihilo* has had a long and important history throughout the Christian tradition. See at random: "Non quia informis materia formalis rebus tempore prior est, cum sit utrumque simul concretum, et unde factum est, et quod factum est. Sicut enim vox materia est verborum, verba vero formatam vocem indicant; non autem qui loquitur, prius emitit informem vocem, quam possit postea colligere, atque in verba formare: ita creator Deus non priore tempore fecit informem materiam, et eam postea per ordinem quarumque naturarum, quisi secunda consideratione formavit, formatam quippe creavit materiam" (Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, LXV.29 (PL 34.257); see also St. Thomas, *Sum. theol.* I, q.45, a.1, and the interesting words of the *Tao Te Ching* (XL): "The myriad of creatures in the world are born from Something, and Something from Nothing" (D. C. Lau translation: II.40.89).

<sup>50</sup> See the analogy of Augustine, who calls God "*anima animae meae*."

<sup>51</sup> See René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (London: Luzac and Co., 1953) (orig. French 1945): "In pure quantity . . . separation is at its maximum, since in quantity resides the very principle of separativity, and the Being is the more 'separated' and shut up in himself the more

### The Economic Moment

If the literature about primordial Man and the origins of humanity is overwhelming, the plethora of thoughts, ideas, and hypotheses formulated regarding the nature of "modernity" is simply bewildering and almost impossible to grasp comprehensively. Moreover, it would distract us from our main task to offer even a cursory overview of the situation. We shall instead limit ourselves to the degree of abstraction that philosophical speculation furnishes.

In any case, the global characteristic of this vast and rich moment in human consciousness is the growing alienation of Man from nature, which is due not only to reason but also to sentiment and history. This alienation would seem to be the price Man has paid for the exasperated consciousness of his own individuality. Today this process has been examined in depth and from numerous angles. Individualization can become an ideal only if Man finds in his individuality the fullness of everything he can be; otherwise it would be an impoverishment. In this period Man's true *oikos* is his *nomos*; his home is no longer the Earth, which he now exploits for his own purposes, but the ideal World (of his mind or of a future to be forged according to his ideal projections). Man is the unconditional sovereign *lord* of the Universe. He is the master of Nature. The center of gravity shifts from the Cosmos to Man and when, after Copernicus, the earth ceases to be the cosmological center of the Universe, the loss is compensated because Man then takes his place and becomes the center. This is the greatness and also the danger of every kind of humanism. Here we have an *anthropocentric* vision of Reality.

### Scientific Humanism

If the first kairological period could be called that of the primordial mentality, this second period could be characterized, on the one hand, by the scientific mentality and, on the other, by the humanistic attitude. Today, almost everything considered valuable bears the label "scientific" or "humanistic." The famous maxim of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things,"<sup>52</sup> if well understood, is unsurpassed in summing up the two operative vectors of this attitude: Man is at the center of everything, and measure at the core of Man's intellectual activity—the metron being not only a quantitative one. It is this predominance of measurement that allows us to characterize this second kairological moment as Man above Nature. Here the divine (acknowledged or not) is hidden in Man. If in the first period Nature is more than "natural," here Man is more than "human," and also more powerful than any single individual.

The operative insight in this moment is the *nomos*, the *dharma*, the *tao* (without calling these concepts synonyms). Man discovers the laws of the universe, the objective structures of the real; he distinguishes, measures, experiments. This is, properly speaking, the historical period in civilization. Man is the "king" of creation, the lord of the universe. And, in discovering the laws of the cosmos, he also slowly comes to discover his own *nomos*; he becomes more and more aware that his mind, his *nous*, is the criterion of intelligibility and perhaps even of reality. After wondering at Nature, he begins to wonder at his own mind and is awestruck to see that the physical universe seems to follow the laws that his mind discovers and can formulate.

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narrowly his possibilities are limited, that is, the less his essential aspect comprises of quality" (84). See the acute voice of St. Thomas: "Scientia Dei est mensura rerum, non quantitativa, qua quidem mensura caret infinita, sed qua mensurat essentiam et veritatem rei" (*Sum. theol.* I, q. 14, a. 12, ad 3).

<sup>52</sup> Protagoras, *Fragment* 1. See my chapter "La superación del humanismo" in *Humanismo y Cruz*, op. cit., 178–253 (with bibliography), which states in a more elaborated way my thesis of 1951. For further references, see H. De Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole*, op. cit., "Religion et humanisme," 145–59.



The divine, however camouflaged, confessed, or unconfessed, emerges within Man. And then the balanced Aristotelian definition of Man as *zōon echōn logon*, as an animal endowed with *logos*, or rather as a living Being transited by this mysterious (divine) power called *logos*, is slowly reinterpreted so as to neglect his animality and reduce his divinity, his *logos*, to mere reason.<sup>33</sup> This *logos* has the astonishing faculty not only of "seeing" things, of knowing objectively, but of seeing that it sees, of knowing knowledge.<sup>34</sup> It is more than mere reflection. Man in his moral conscience has always had the power of reflection and a sense of responsibility. Here we are concerned with reflection raised to the third power, as it were: reflection, not on things (I know that I am knowing things), not on the I who thinks (I know that it is my I who knows things), but on reflection itself (I know that I know in and through my knowing power). Here Man not only knows that he is a knowing Being but turns this very knowledge into the object of his reflection. Here Man is caught in the very act of examining his power to know. This generates not only philosophy but critical philosophy: the *res cogitans* is what matters here, what makes Man Man, and ultimately also divine. Reason is enthroned as the ultimate and positive criterion of truth. In a sense, reason had always been considered a negative criterion, ever since Man discovered that his awareness could also be reflective awareness. It had a kind of veto power: what reason finds contradictory cannot be the cue. But this negative and passive power of reason becomes positive and active as the second kairological period evolves. Then, reason not only says what cannot be, but also what must be.

In the Western world, one could consider Descartes the representative of this radical change. Certainly, what is contradictory cannot be true, but truth is not governed exclusively by noncontradiction. The famous one hundred thalers in Kant's purse are not contradictory, and yet they need not therefore be true, be in his purse. The legitimate wish to find a positive criterion for truth led Descartes to affirm that I can accept as true only that which I see with clarity and distinction to be the case. But this affirmation cannot be reversed, for truth would then be considered only what I see with clarity and distinction. And yet this is precisely what Descartes did—concerned as he was to establish a single criterion for truth from among a diversity of irreconcilable opinions. This means that the moment I am more worried about certainty than about truth, I shall have to ask not only for what is the case but for what I can be certain is the case. This prompted Descartes, almost inadvertently, to reverse the sentence, and from the epistemological advice that I should take for true only that which I can see with clarity and distinction, he drew the ontological conclusion that truth is only what the human

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<sup>33</sup> Aristotle's words are: "Man is the only animal whom [nature] has endowed with *logos* (the gift of speech)" (*Polit.* I.2.1253a 9ff.; see VII.13.1332b5). Elsewhere I described the passage from *Verbum Dei* ("Word of God," divine *Logos*) to the *verbum entis* (word of being) of metaphysics, and thus to the *verbum mentis* (word of the mind) of epistemology, arriving at the *verbum mundi* (word of the world) of the theorists of science and the *verbum hominis* (word of man) of the philosophy of language. In each case the spirit has been forgotten. The theologians spoke of *Verbum Dei* and regarded this *Verbum Dei* as God, while adding in parentheses that it was actually the Son of God. The metaphysicians constructed it as *verbum entis*, and this *verbum entis* was understood as 'being,' and often deified. The epistemologists based their judgments of the truth on *verbum mentis*. More recent philosophers have made of *verbum mundi* their starting-point, and both the scientific theorists and the modern philosophers of language consider *verbum hominis* as a last resort. Not only has 'being' been forgotten, but myth is no longer considered, and this disregard has also affected the *pneuma* ("Die Philosophie in der geistigen Situation der Zeit," Akten des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie [Wien: Herder, 1971], 80).

<sup>34</sup> See Aristotle, saying that the mind can know itself: *De anima* III.4 (429b9), repeating that the mind in itself is thinkable as its objects are (430a2) and insisting that theoretical science and its object are identical (*ibid.*).

mind can see with clarity and distinction.<sup>55</sup> From that moment on, truth was the prisoner of human reason, and the way was open for the Copernican revolution of the modern age.<sup>56</sup>

Yet Descartes's epistemological principle would still leave room for the supra-rational and allow reality some independence with respect to reason, because the human mind was still considered to function in a predominantly passive way. Since Aristotle, in the West, the soul, precisely as the principle of intellection, was considered *quodammodo omnia* (in a way all things).<sup>57</sup> Understanding was considered to be really "standing under" the influence of the things themselves. It was Kant who changed the mainly passive role of reason to a more active function. Truth then is not only what we can see with clarity and distinction but, above all, that about which we can be certain because we monitor the proper functioning of the mind, without unduly transgressing its rules or the fundamental exigencies of empirical data.<sup>58</sup>

The next steps are well-known. Reason becomes the Spirit and the Spirit the supreme reality: God. In any case, as Hegel would later formulate, commenting on Descartes: "Consciousness is an essential moment of truth."<sup>59</sup> Idealism reigns, and the dignity of Man lies in sharing this very movement of the Spirit. But half of reality, to say the least, is poorly represented in this moment: matter and the world of praxis are only present in the workings of the Spirit in attenuated form. No wonder that two reactions appeared forcefully on the Western intellectual stage in the past century: the one that capsized Hegel and led to the emergence of Marx, Engels, and their school; and the other, the a- or supra-rational revivals

<sup>55</sup> See Descartes's first rule: "De ne recevoir jamais aucune chose pour vraie que je ne la connusse évidemment être telle: c'est-à-dire d'éviter soigneusement la précipitation et la prévention, et de ne comprendre rien de plus en mes jugements que ce qui se présenterait si clairement et si distinctement à mon esprit que je n'eusse aucune occasion de le mettre en doute" (*Discours de la methode, Oeuvres de Descartes* [Paris: Librairie Joseph Gibert, 1940]).

<sup>56</sup> This is the familiar paraphrase of Kant's self-evaluation of his *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*; see the note to his preface to the second edition (1787): "So verschaffen die Zentralgesetze der Bewegungen der Himmelskörper dem, was Kopernikus anfänglich nur als Hypothese annahm, ausgemachte Gewissheit und bewiesen zugleich die unsichtbare, den Weltbau verbindende Kraft (der Newtonischen Anziehung), welche auf immer unentdeckt geblieben wäre, wenn der erstere es nicht gewagt hätte, auf eine widersinnische, aber doch wahre Art die beobachteten Bewegungen nicht in den Gegenständen des Himmels, sondern in ihrem Zuschauer zu suchen. Ich stelle in dieser Vorrede die in der Kritik vorgetragene, jener Hypothese analogische Unmänderung der Denkart auch nur als Hypothese auf, ob sie gleich in der Abhandlung selbst aus der Beschaffenheit unserer Vorstellungen von Raum und Zeit und der Elementarabgriffen des Verstandes nicht hypothetisch, sondern apodiktisch bewiesen wird, um nur die ersten Versuche einer solchen Umänderung, welche allemal hypothetisch sind, bemerklich zu machen" (Berlin: Cassirer, 1922), xxii (21).

<sup>57</sup> "The soul is all the existing things," Aristotle, III *De Anima* VIII (431b21); St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* I, q.14, a.1c: "Propter quod dicit Philosophus, III *de Anima*, quod anima est quodammodo omnia."

<sup>58</sup> "Bisher nahm Man an, alle unsere Erkenntnis müsse sich nach den Gegenständen richten; aber alle Versuche, über sie a priori etwas durch Begriffen auszumachen, wodurch unsere Erkenntnis erweitert würde, gingen unter dieser Voraussetzung zunichte. Man versuche es daher einmal, ob wir nicht in den Aufgaben der Metaphysik damit besser fortkommen, dass wir annehmen, die Gegenstände müssen sich nach unserem Erkenntnis richten, welches so schon besser mit der verlangten Möglichkeit einer Erkenntnis derselben a priori zusammenstimmt, die über Gegenstände, ehe sie uns gegeben werden, etwas festsetzen soll" (I. Kant, preface to *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, op. cit., xvi-xvii (17-18)).

<sup>59</sup> He says literally that "Das Selbstbewusstsein wesentliches Moment des Wahren ist" (Self-consciousness is an essential stage of Truth) (G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Sämtliche Werke* [Stuttgart: Frommann, 1959], ed. Glockener, Bd. XIX, 328. Significantly enough, Hegel goes on to comment (having earlier considered Böhme): "Hier können wir sagen, sind wir zu Hause" [Here we can say that we are at home].

of every sort, from fideism, voluntarism, and Romanticism to neo-Thomism, existentialism, and mysticism.

We are obviously still too immersed in this period to have a critical perspective on it. Even those who have stepped "outside" are still touched by its fundamental attitudes, in spite of the critiques that nowadays seem so fashionable among "avant garde" thinkers. Curiously enough, "les extrêmes se touchent," for what only a few decades ago was considered almost medieval (read: unenlightened) obscurantism now appears to be the "last word" in modern thinking.<sup>60</sup>

As correct as many of these contemporary critics are, we cannot ignore the intrinsic value of scientific discoveries, the "advantages" brought to humankind by science, the indisputable blessings of modern civilization. We would do well also to recall that even the most anti-Western countries and "reactionary" movements do not want to get rid of the present in all of its aspects.<sup>61</sup> According to the former, the economic moment does not need to be destroyed: they rather aim at undoing the ties with a Market that is shown as if it were Nature. Our task is not to abolish it, but to overcome its absolute grip on modern Man.<sup>62</sup> It is this period that has made possible an inkling of planetary consciousness, or at least human communication on a global scale. And if it is true that many of our modern problems have been in large part created by the very scientific civilization that now tries to solve them, it is also undeniable that modern civilization has enhanced—to some (few) people(s), at least—the quality of life on Earth.<sup>63</sup> No romanticism or nostalgia should blind us to this state of affairs.<sup>64</sup> Let us consider the machine, for example: if on the one hand it seems to degrade Man to the level of matter, on the other hand it surely uplifts matter to the level of Man.<sup>65</sup>

Anyway, in a balanced evaluation of the modern era, the awareness of its limitations cannot be set aside: we seem in fact to be at the end of modernity.<sup>66</sup> Thinkers of the most varied tendencies seem to agree on this point.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See a convincing summary of the evolution of Western culture from the Middle Ages in Lynn White Jr., "Science and the Sense of Self: The Medieval Background of a Modern Confrontation," *Daedalus* (Spring 1978): 47–59.

<sup>61</sup> A conspicuous example might be the policies of most modern African nations.

<sup>62</sup> See J. Ellul: "I use the word [convergence] to show that in a technological civilisation the different techniques with which Man has to deal in his day-to-day activities are entirely unrelated to each other and often even pull in different and seemingly incompatible directions; yet, in the end, they all come down to man, they converge on him and threaten to reduce him to an object of techniques. In other words, it isn't Man so much dealing with technologies as the technologies dealing with man" ("Conformism and the Rationale of Technology," in *Can We Survive Our Future? A Symposium*, edited by G. R. Urban in collaboration with M. Glenny [London: The Bodley Head, 1971], 89–90).

<sup>63</sup> "What humanity needs is not a wholesale discarding of advance technologies, but a sifting, indeed a further development of technology along ecological principles that will contribute to a new harmonisation of society and the natural world" (Ecology Action East, "The Power to Destroy, the Power to Create," in Barbour, op. cit., 245). The problem is: to what extent will this sifting be effective?

<sup>64</sup> Even as severe a critic as Ellul is emphatic about this: "I am not condemning technique or technology—I'm not trying to pass judgement. . . . I am trying to see how the individual who is the main victim of technique could be spared some of his suffering. But technique is here to stay. It is the result of an evolutionary process which has also given us much we ought to be grateful for. But, I repeat, it is only by understanding exactly how the technical system works that we can determine how Man can live with the technical system" (op. cit., 95).

<sup>65</sup> See my *Técnica y tiempo. La tecnocrónia* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967).

<sup>66</sup> See W. I. Thompson's *At Edge of History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), and M. McLuhan's notion of a "tribal village" in *War and Peace in the Global Village* (with Q. Fiore) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 6.

<sup>67</sup> "Whether we are unable to sustain growth or to tolerate it, the long era of industrial expansion

*The Ecological Crisis*

Three main experiences, I submit, have led modern Man to question the very foundations of his humanity, as it has commonly been understood in the humanistic phase of Man's self-understanding. The first is the experience that the *humanum* seems to exclude the Earth. Today the material universe seems to be taking revenge by running out of "fuel," by showing its limited capacities—in short, by reacting to its treatment at the hands of Man, who has for so long exploited Nature for his own purposes, and in fact for the exclusive use of but a tiny minority of humankind. This experience underlies the ecological attitude.

The second experience is the sense—the realization—of failure afflicting Man's dreams for building a truly humane civilization. In spite of his vast technological megamachine, Man seems to have failed to create a truly humanistic era, and the reason for this failure is neither a miscalculation nor a technical fault. We cannot impute either ignorance or impotence as the cause of our modern predicament. Theoretically we can eradicate poverty, injustice, hunger, and exploitation; we can dominate Nature to an astonishing degree; we can live in peace without lethal ideological conflicts; we can build a world without want; and we can attain all the freedom and well-being of which Man has dreamed since time immemorial.<sup>68</sup> And yet modern Man feels more than ever in the grip of a fate he can in no way control. And this fate is all the more terrifying since Man today can predict what it will be. He can predict that, given the runaway accumulation of weaponry in the global arsenal, their utilization becomes more and more likely in future conflicts; he can foresee that the increasing gap between the haves and have-nots on every level will trigger violent reactions; he can be fairly sure that nationalistic ideologies will not be stopped except by counter-ideologies, and so on and so forth. Here modern Man, as in the ecological situation, may be able to postpone the conflict for a while by placing the burden of facing these monumental issues on the next generation, but whenever he stops to think, he instinctively feels how artificial and finally lethal this "strategy" can be: it may console a few, but it surely will not solve the problem. We can certainly stop thinking about a particular problem, but we cannot ignore it, all the more so if we are convinced that that would not be a solution.<sup>69</sup>

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is now entering its final stages," says R. Heilbroner in *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 129, after a detailed analysis of our current situation. Or again, "The age of the machine is already over," L. Mumford declared over four decades ago in *The Conduct of Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951), 4. See also R. Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit; ein Versuch zur Orientierung* (Basel: Hess Verlag, 1950). In English: *The End of the Modern World* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956); or again, in the words of M. Heidegger: "We are thinking of the possibility that the world civilization which is just now beginning might one day overcome the technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of Man's world sojourn. This may happen not of and through itself, but in virtue of the readiness of Man for a determination which, whether listened to or not, always speaks in the destiny of Man which has not been decided. . . . Perhaps there is a thinking which is more sober than the irresistible race of rationalization and the sweeping character of cybernetics. . . . Perhaps there is a thinking outside of the distinction of rational and irrational still more sober than scientific technology—more sober and thus more removed, without effect and yet having its own necessity" ("The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being* [New York: Harper & Row, 1972]).

<sup>68</sup> This has long been R. Buckminster Fuller's "message," e.g., in his "World Game" scenarios for "making the world work." Physical "success" for humankind on planet Earth may well be technically feasible today, as Fuller and others have tried to demonstrate, but its attainment has rarely seemed more humanly remote, due to the intrinsic human limitations elucidated below. It is now more than ever obvious that an appeal to reason alone—or, similarly, a plea for scientific rationality in human affairs—addresses only a small portion of the complex human reality.

<sup>69</sup> These sentences, written decades ago, at the beginning of this new century look all too "light"

What does seem clear to many today is the terrifying awareness that our present situation is no longer a technical or a moral issue, that is, no longer merely a question of the proper know-how or know-why. Even if Human beings were in fact wise and moral, we are riding a tiger from which we cannot dismount. "Stop the world, I want to get off!" may sound like a cry of both hope and despair, but we know very well that humankind neither can nor will do so. It is too late to find an escape for my ego. In a word, modern Man is aware that forces are at work that he cannot master and with which he has not yet reckoned. The total solidarity so long shunned by the elites now devolves upon the entire human race.

If the first experience consists in discovering the limitations of the physical universe in general, and particularly those of this Earth, the second experience is the inner discovery of the limits of Man, limits whose cause is not some lack of factual know-how, but something deeper, something ultimately unfathomable. The classical idea of a Laplacean spirit cannot work today: even with unlimited means at our disposal and complete knowledge of human and natural laws, we would still face uncertainty, risk, and considerable danger. In fact, we are all keenly aware of this situation, even if we do not heed the more pessimistic prophets of doom.

While the first experience is manifest in our ecological predicament and the second in the humanistic crisis, the third shows itself in a theological dilemma. This third experience refers to the incompatibility between the traditional idea of the divine and the modern understanding of cosmos and Man. In a sense, it is a similar failure: the cosmos is falling apart, Man cannot solve his own problems, and even God seems unable to stand up to his own claims. The era when God fought for the Hebrews, the Muslims, or the Christians at the Red Sea, Guadalete, or Lepanto seems to be long past. The God of history remains idle, the God of the philosophers is indifferent, and the God of religion no longer seems very much concerned about the human condition. Is it any wonder that the present crisis cuts to the very roots of reality and cannot be solved by partial reforms or half-measures? For too long now the Gods have betrayed the humans, and God himself seems to have broken his promises—even managing to trick Man into accepting the dire responsibility for his own free will. If the Almighty knew Man's weaknesses, was it not unfair of him to lay down conditions that he knew Man could never keep? By placing that apple in the midst of Paradise and allowing the Serpent to speak to the Woman, was the fall not inevitable sooner or later? How can an almighty and merciful God allow all the suffering and injustices of the human condition as it really is? Enlightened theism may not have been as crude as the "Death of God" theology would have us believe, but the popular conceptions were not very far removed from the caricatures drawn by the critics of traditional religions. One could perhaps sum up the experience of modern Man with an overstatement by saying that God did not save Man and so Man has abandoned him. An abandoned God obviously amounts to a dead God, a God denied. And the *deus ex machina* invoked by the pale deism of the "intellectuals" can no longer suffice to keep the cosmic machine going. By now we know better.<sup>70</sup>

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and benevolent, compared with the current world situation. No need to list facts and figures. The "war" against "terrorism" destroys the Earth and Men, besides being self-defeating. The answer does not lie in a technological reaction, as rather in a spiritual one—coming from an embodied spirituality, as we will see below.

<sup>70</sup> This attitude is expressed very well by F. Schiller in his "Die Götter Griechenlands":

Unbewusst der Freuden, die sie schenket,  
Nie entzückt von ihrer Herrlichkeit,  
Nie gewahr des Geistes, der sie lenket,

However these three experiences may be interpreted, this is where we stand today. Our contemporary epoch, which we might describe as Man in Nature, is the inevitable outcome of the economic era and serves in turn as a necessary prelude to the third kairological moment. The divine, if at all recognized, is a third and separate element that does not seem to play a preponderant role. An exclusively and absolutely transcendent God transcends not only Man's thinking orbit but also escapes the galaxy of Being. He ceases to be, tout court.

An ancient psalm may help stress this change:

He numbers the multitude of stars  
and calls them all by names.  
Great is our Lord and great is his power  
and of his wisdom there is no measure.<sup>71</sup>

The stars have numbers; they are quantifiable magnitudes. Everything has a number, as in the sentence so often cited throughout the Middle Ages:

Thou hast ordered all things  
by measure and number and weight.<sup>72</sup>

Hence everything is measurable, the entire cosmos appertains to a quantitative order, and nothing escapes the *mathesis universalis* that has so fascinated the best spirits of every age.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, however, each star has its proper name, although only the Lord who has named them—and not Man—knows it. The name is the power of wisdom, the name escapes number; everything has its measure except the wisdom of the Lord, which is immeasurable and without number. Wisdom belongs to the realm of quality, and if, after Protagoras, we cannot escape the conviction that "Man is the measure of all things,"<sup>74</sup> then Man himself is

Sel'ge nur durch meine Seligkeit,  
Fühllos selbst für ihres Künstlers Ehre,  
Gleich dem toten Schlag der Pendeluhr,  
Dient sie knechtisch dem Gesetz der Schwere,  
Die entgötterte Natur.

Unconscious of the joys she gives,  
Never fascinated with her own majesty,  
Never aware of the spirit she guides,  
Happy only through my own happiness,  
Uninterested in the glory of her artists,  
Just like a dead pendulum clockwork,  
Slavishly obeying the law of gravity  
Is the undeified Nature.

<sup>71</sup> Ps 147:4–5. It is difficult to convey the full thrust of this passage if we do not at least keep in mind the Greek version in the LXX, or the New Latin Version: "Definit numerum stellarum, / singulas nomine vocat. / Magnus Dominus noster et viribus potens, / sapientiae eius non est numerus."

<sup>72</sup> Ws 11:20, which the LXX renders, "allà panta métrō kai arithmō kai stathmō diētaxis," and the Vulgate translates, "Sed omnia in mensura, et numero et pondere disposuisti."

<sup>73</sup> It is enough to mention Pythagoras, R. Lull, Nicolas of Cusa, Kepler, and Leibniz, to which group one is tempted to add modern names like Gödel, Einstein, Russell, Fuller, and many others.

<sup>74</sup> See above.

not measured by anything—he also is without measure or number, because he is the image and likeness of the infinite.<sup>75</sup> In brief, reality has an immeasurable dimension, whether we locate it in the cosmos, in Man, or anywhere else. This, in point of fact, is already a description of the third kairological moment, but let us first describe the intermediate ecological situation a little further.

Today we face the consequences of the period now coming to an end. Alienation has become a popular catchword. Severed from an unacceptable God above and an inert World below, Man becomes increasingly lonely. He has spread the net of his intelligibility like an insecticide and killed all the intermediary Beings he cannot master with his mind. The spirits, once his companions, are no longer credible; the Gods have flown; and a solitary and ever more superfluous God fades away.<sup>76</sup> Even Nature, on which Man seemed to have such an iron grip, now slips from his grasp, both intellectually<sup>77</sup> and physically.<sup>78</sup> The optimism of the New Science has given way to the sober realization that Nature cannot be manipulated either mentally or physically with immunity or impunity.<sup>79</sup>

The scientist can no longer just observe from a detached and neutral perspective; willy-nilly he is involved in the very phenomena that he observes, and the very act of observation cannot be severed from what is observed.<sup>80</sup> So too, Nature reacts to centuries of abuse by confronting Man with exhausted resources, extinct species, and the drastic degradation of the environment on a worldwide scale. All this is but a prelude to the contemporary crisis—which is more a crisis of civilization itself than a crisis of any particular civilization.<sup>81</sup> The *civis*, the citizen, and the *civitas*, the city, have ceased to be viable human paradigms. The jungle is no longer available for escape, and even the desert can hardly be considered deserted when weapons of ultimate destruction are stationed and tested there. When all the retreats have been cut off, what is to be done?

<sup>75</sup> See Gen 1:27. See also the collection of essays edited by Leo Scheffczyk, *Der Mensch als Bild Gottes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), and the monograph by Henry Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*, Coll. Théologie 34 (Paris: Aubier, 1956), which gives an idea of the central place this conviction holds in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

<sup>76</sup> It is another coincidence to note that when M. Heidegger tries to describe the contemporary situation, he speaks about "Die Flucht der Götter, die Zerstörung der Erde, die Vermassung des Menschen," in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953; new ed. 1966), 29, 34.

<sup>77</sup> See the theory of incompleteness of Gödel; the theory of relativity of Einstein; the principle of indeterminacy of Heisenberg; the many hypotheses concerning the unconscious of Freud, Jung, and others; the élan vital of Bergson; the *Angst* of Heidegger; the *absurde* of Sartre; the belief in the supernatural of Christians and others; etc.

<sup>78</sup> Many of the theories just mentioned arise from the experience that Nature has a spontaneity, a dynamism, a thrust, and power superior to and independent from Man.

<sup>79</sup> Again, the work of P. Duhem, *Le système du monde*, op. cit., is indispensable in understanding the epoch-making change that modern science has effected in Man and the new phase we are currently undergoing. See also Koyré (1957; 1968; 1973).

<sup>80</sup> See: "What Bohr was pointing to in 1927 was the curious realization that in the atomic domain, the only way the observer (including his equipment) can be uninvolved is if he observes nothing at all" (G. Holton, "The Roots of Complementarity," in *Tradition und Gegenwart*, *Eranos Jahrbuch* CCCVII, 1968 [Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1970], 49). Or again: "We cannot observe atoms as they are in themselves, objectively as it were, for there are no such things. We can only seize them in the act of observation, and we can say meaningful things about this relationship only. We are deeply imbedded in this interplay" (W. Heisenberg, "Rationality in Science and Society," in Urban and Glenn, op. cit., 83).

<sup>81</sup> "It is a civilizational malaise that enters into our current frame of mind," R.L. Heilbroner says pointedly in his balanced and insightful book, *The Human Prospect*, op. cit., 20.

In these past decades, the mapping of the human genome—as well as transplant surgery, experiments with clones, and the production of genetically modified food—led Man once more to see himself as the master of universe and of his own destiny. Moral curbs are useless, as they always have been. The issue is a much deeper one: a reform will not suffice, a change in our civilization is needed; and, to achieve that, we need an anthropological change, which is impossible to get without a spiritual *metanoia*—and I hope that these pages may prove helpful about it.

Man has to find his way in and through a desacralized Nature.<sup>82</sup> For her part, Nature seems to have lost patience, and Man has finally realized that she is not absolute or infinite, or even indefinitely receptive and obedient.<sup>83</sup> When Man himself has eliminated every absolute from his life, why should the cosmos substitute for it? We are learning that the Being of the Earth is finite. Ecological consciousness arises when Man begins to discover that Nature is not just infinite passivity and that this planet is a limited vessel.<sup>84</sup> So Man decides to be a more humane manager of Mother Earth and tries to deal more rationally with Nature, but this really amounts to only a tactical change: "Now our exploitation must be milder and more reasonable." The underlying idea remains the same: "Only treated in this way is the Earth going to yield her fruits."<sup>85</sup> The *oikos* is still dominated by the human *logos*. A new science, ecology, has appeared and has all the earmarks of becoming yet another tool for human mastery of the Earth. As long as ecology is a science, we have not overcome the second moment of scientific knowledge, that is, we still fall under the rule of the theory that guides our praxis by trying to make it as rational and reasonable as possible—which is an improvement, to be sure, but certainly not enough.

Indeed, today Man cultivates a new attitude toward Nature; he rediscovers her beauty, her value, and even begins a new companionship with the Earth. He becomes more sensitive

<sup>82</sup> See the now almost classic words of Lynn White Jr.: "Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward Man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians. Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim" ("The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in Barbour, op. cit., 27–28).

<sup>83</sup> See as an example of this "environmental knowledge" the statement "The environment is finite and our non-renewable resources are finite. When the stocks run out we will have to recycle what we have used" (W. Murdoch and J. Connell, "All about Ecology," in Barbour, op. cit., 166).

<sup>84</sup> See K. E. Boulding: "We are going to have to face the fact, for instance, certainly within a couple generations, that Earth has become a 'space ship' and a very small, crowded space ship at that, destination unknown" ("The Prospects of Economic Abundance," in *The Control of Environment*, ed. J. D. Roslansky [Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1967], 52). See also R. B. Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), and B. Ward, *Spaceship Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

<sup>85</sup> Can we see remnants of "male chauvinism" in the concept of terra mater? See the words of O. L. Freeman: "What I am suggesting for your consideration . . . is that we, the people, take better charge of the environment, control it, if you please in a way that creates a more reasonable and responsible national distribution of productive and creative enterprises and utilization of workers" (Opening Convocation Address, in Roslansky, op. cit., 5). Or again: "A responsible environmental ethic would recognize Man's finitude and his place in the cosmos. He has been selected to be the custodian of God's creation and to transform the natural order for human welfare. But he must appreciate the limits of technical transformation. The side-effects of all his actions must be carefully calculated, and appropriate plans must be made to offset their negative effects. He must further understand that even the positive aspects of his technical transformations affect various people differently" (N. J. Faramelli, "Ecological Responsibility and Economic Justice," in Barbour, op. cit., 200).



and learns to treat her with care, even love.<sup>86</sup> But Man is still the boss, the king, although perhaps as a constitutional, rather than an absolute, monarch.<sup>87</sup> Yet a more fundamental change is already under way.<sup>88</sup> It may well be that fear of imminent catastrophe triggered the ecological movement, but its roots run deeper than mere anxiety for survival.<sup>89</sup> After all, the most ecologically minded people are those least immediately threatened by the situation. There is at the base of the ecological sensitivity an almost imperceptible shift from a primarily active attitude vis-à-vis reality to a more passive attitude. Man, however, still believes himself to be the center of the universe; he takes responsibility for the entire world and likes to speak of his initiative. The ecological attitude, significantly enough, remains an active and technological attitude.<sup>90</sup> Science itself has always wanted mainly to know, to discover, and ultimately to control reality. And this is why—to the dismay of moralists—it does not seem much concerned with what is called the social responsibility of science. The scientist is passionately interested, for instance, in discovering the workings of the physical atom or the biological cell, and yet seems utterly insensitive—with some exceptions—to the technical “translation” of this research into bombs or genetic engineering.<sup>91</sup> Technology, in

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<sup>86</sup> See the remarks of R. Dubos: “Fortunately, one of the most important consequences of enlightened anthropocentrism is that Man cannot effectively manipulate nature without loving nature for her own sake” (“A Theology of the Earth,” in Barbour, op. cit., 53). Or again: “Can we not at such a time realize the moral unity of our human experience and make it the basis of a patriotism for the world itself?” (B. Ward, op. cit., 148).

<sup>87</sup> The assumption that Man retains a God-given “seignory over nature” persists with remarkable hardness even as he “steps down” to the posture of “benevolent dictatorship” implied in the ecological attitude toward the Earth. No more striking example comes immediately to mind than former U.S. president Ford’s “detente with nature” address at the dedication of a new National Environmental Research Center in Cincinnati, July 3, 1975. First the tactical change: “In a time of reconciliation, I would propose one more area for greater understanding. I would suggest a detente with nature. We have too long treated the natural world as an adversary rather than as a life-sustaining gift from the Almighty. If Man has the genius to build, he must also have the ability and responsibility to preserve.” But then the catch: “I pursue the goal of clean air and pure water, but I must also pursue the objective of maximum jobs and continued economic progress. Unemployment is as real and sickening a blight as any pollutant that threatens this nation” (as reported by UPI, Washington Bureau).

<sup>88</sup> As W. L. Thompson says in his *Passages about Earth: An Exploration of the New Planetary Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973, 1974), “If we truly wish to achieve a planetary transformation of human culture, we must go beyond the authoritarian conspiracies of [H. G.] Wells and [W. W.] Wager and the technocratic elitism of the Club of Rome to raise into consciousness the cosmic mythologies that are now sweeping the planet” (81).

<sup>89</sup> See, for two examples of this “duality,” the words of Ecology Action East: “Today, if we are to survive, we must begin to live. Our solutions must be commensurable with the scope of the problem, or else nature will take a terrifying revenge on humanity” (op. cit., 252), and R. Dubos: “The phrase ‘theology of the earth’ thus came to me from the Apollo astronauts’ accounts of what they had seen from their space capsule, making me realize that the earth is a living organism. . . . The phrase ‘theology of the earth’ thus denotes for me the scientific understanding of the sacred relationships that link mankind to all the physical and living attributes of the earth” (op. cit., 43–44).

<sup>90</sup> So it is not surprising, for example, that Stewart Brand and the Whole Earth Catalogue/CoEvolution Quarterly staff have undertaken to produce the definitive catalog of computer software.

<sup>91</sup> See the candid and revealing testimony of Werner Heisenberg: “I remember a conversation with Enrico Fermi after the War, a short time before the first Hydrogen Bomb was to be tested in the Pacific. We discussed this proposal, and I suggested that one should perhaps abstain from such a test considering the biological and political consequences. Fermi replied: But it is such a beautiful experiment” (in “The Great Tradition: End of an Epoch?” *Encounter* 44, no. 3 (March 1975): 54). And despite the famous

contrast, is not only applied science but also presupposes the determination to apply the sciences, to make them useful, powerful. In this sense, ecology belongs to technology. It is applied science, it has the means to act, and it will defend the proposition that action is the true function of philosopher and scientist alike. Contemplation by itself becomes almost unjustifiable.<sup>92</sup> The contemplative feels the need to justify himself, to prove that he also is useful, and the speculative philosopher must repeat time and again that he is not a mere spectator, but the most important actor, though only in the long run.

Here the ecological attitude affirms the contemporary belief that theory without praxis is barren—perhaps even inhuman and criminal—and that, conversely, praxis without theory is blind—perhaps even cruel and destructive.

In any case, Man adopts a more “humane” and active, although probably also less natural, approach to Nature. The concept of techniculture—as distinct from agriculture, and in contrast to technology—could be introduced here. By this word I mean to suggest a new awareness of the Man-World relationship and thus a new sensitivity toward the body, matter, society, and the entire World.<sup>93</sup> Relationships with matter and the cosmos in general become more intimate. Contemporary science will try to leap over the chasm between the objective and the subjective. Here we have an anthropocosmic vision of reality.

### *The Ecosophic Interlude*

Ecology is a movement that has opened our eyes to the fragility of the planet and its limitations and led to a very positive change in our relationship with an environment that is to be cared for and respected. Nevertheless, we have not yet reached the point of a new cosmology. The world vision underlying ecology has not been freed, on the one hand, from the dualist notion of the material and inert world or, on the other, from the world of human beings who have the right to exploit these resources. The Earth is an object and is not thought to be capable of also being a subject—as animist theory hypothesizes and as ecosophy maintains.

In this sense I use the word *ecosophy*—the wisdom of the Earth—as a subjective genitive; that is to say, not our more or less convincing vision of what the Earth is but, as I have explained elsewhere, the Earth’s own wisdom, which Man grasps when he enters into true communion with it.<sup>94</sup>

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Oppenheimer case of 1954, this attitude seems to prevail today, making the words of Oppenheimer himself (written in 1947) all the more poignant: “Despite the vision and the far-seeing wisdom of our wartime heads of State, the physicists felt a peculiarly intimate responsibility for suggesting, for supporting, and in the end, in large measure, for achieving the realization of atomic weapons. Nor can we forget that these weapons, as they were in fact used, dramatized so mercilessly the inhumanity and evil of modern war. In some sort of crude sense which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge they cannot lose” (“Physics and the Contemporary World,” in *The Open Mind* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1955], 88).

<sup>92</sup> See the statement: “The day of study and retreat is past. We must balance our cerebrations and meditations with down-to-earth externalization and anchoring of the New Age visions,” which expresses the guiding philosophy of the Findhorn community (*apud* Thompson, *op. cit.*, 163).

<sup>93</sup> As an expression of this attitude, see W. Berry paraphrasing J. S. Collis (*The Triumph of the Tree*): “We will realize that we do not live on earth, but with and within its life. We will realize that the earth is not dead, like the concept of property, but as vividly and intricately alive as a man or a woman, and that there is a delicate interdependence between its life and our own” (“A Secular Pilgrimage,” in Barbour, *op. cit.*, 138).

<sup>94</sup> See Panikkar (1993/XXXIV), etc.

This attitude toward the Earth is not to be interpreted as a "return" to some kind of irrational or sentimental "primitivism," but rather as a new relationship with all material realities.

This vision, emerging in our time, is a step toward the moment of integration for the various experiences of humanity and can be considered the task of our age.

We have spoken of an anthropological change, which, if it is to last, must shift from its foundation—in this case the Earth itself, whose language we must learn. Ecosophic consciousness may be the interlude for a less fragmented vision of Reality. The Earth warns us that we cannot continue on the current path. This approach is not a sentimental return to nature, but rather a discovery of our *advaita* and sacramental bond with matter.<sup>95</sup>

I have summarized this new sensitivity under nine headings:

1. Demonetization of culture
2. Dismantling of the towers of Babel
3. Overcoming the ideology of nation-states
4. The return of modern science to its own limits
5. Correction of technocracy through art
6. Overcoming of democracy through a new cosmovision
7. Recovery of animism
8. Peace with the Earth
9. Rediscovery of the divine dimension<sup>96</sup>

This is a program we present as a project for development, but not in this book.

### The Innocent Moment

I call this third moment "innocent" according to the primordial meaning of the word: *in-nocens*, that is, not harming, not doing evil, not doing violence to reality, non "violating" it. Innocence respects every Being's dignity; it does not use knowledge as an intrusion into the inwardness of things.<sup>97</sup> This respect for reality involves an attitude of love and trust. Man finds again his own place within reality without doing any violence to it: he lies in the womb of reality, and he allows it—"her"—to embrace him.

Contemporary Man increasingly senses that it is not a matter of looking for a merely transcendent Godhead, nor of projecting this Godhead into the future as the first symbol for transcendence—in point of fact, all the futuristic utopias common to our times are signs of this search.<sup>98</sup> The crisis is profound: futuristic dreams are not enough to save those who will die in the meantime.<sup>99</sup> Half-measures and substitutes will not do. Nothing short of a radical

<sup>95</sup> Henryk Skolimowski (1992) introduced the term "ecophilosophy" in this sense.

<sup>96</sup> Panikkar (2000/20).

<sup>97</sup> See Panikkar (2003/xxxii).

<sup>98</sup> The spirituality of the "Omega point" of Teilhard de Chardin (*The Future of Man* [New York: Harper, 1964] and *The Divine Milieu* [New York: Harper, 1960], 112–49) and the theory of God as "absolute Zukunft" of Karl Rahner (*Schriften zur Theologie* 6 [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965], 78–88) are typical examples, besides the great ideal of Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* (II, end), which proclaims: "In place of the old society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

<sup>99</sup> "Hay que afrontar la situación real de la humanidad con toda su crudeza. Para la actual genera-

*metanoia*, a complete turning of mind, heart, and spirit, will meet today's needs.<sup>100</sup> It is simply not enough, for instance, to penalize those who litter highways or tax companies that pollute waterways. Important as such measures are, they treat only symptoms. It is not enough to teach children to be kind to Nature and to encourage adults to become conscious of ecological problems. The change required is radical; it is less a new policy of Man toward Nature than a conversion that recognizes their common destiny. As long as World and Man are seen as mutually estranged Beings, as long as their relation is one of master and slave—following the metaphor of Hegel and Marx—as long as this relation is not seen to be constitutive of both Man and World, no lasting remedy will be found. For this reason, I submit that no dualistic solution can endure; that it is not merely a question of treating Nature as an extension of Man's body, for example, but that we need to gain, perhaps to conquer for the first time on a global scale, a new innocence. This is the challenge of contemporary ecosophy. It is not only about facing the technological issues that aim at eliminating pollution, curbing population, and conserving resources—vital as these issues are. It is a global dilemma that far surpasses the boundaries of the rich countries or the problems of industrialization.<sup>101</sup>

An example can help to better understand what I mean. No amount of laws is needed today, nor a special police team, to prevent men from eating one another. After human consciousness started considering anthropophagy as disgusting, it simply disappeared.

And for this reason no merely technical solution—urgent as it may be—will suffice. A note of warning should be sounded here against the dictatorial and totalitarian temptation to bridle human dynamism and personal freedom by merely external, coercive, and artificial means. An *ontonomic* order has to be found, instead, that will take into account the overall contours of the problem without ignoring the fundamental exigencies of regional ontologies.<sup>102</sup> For this, we need to develop a more integral experience, an issue about which

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ción, para los millones de seres humanos de Asia y Africa de 1975 no hay esperanza ni solución en el orden de la temporalidad" (R. Panikkar, "El presente eterno," in A. Vargas-Machuca [ed.], *Teología y mundo contemporáneo. Homenaje a K. Rahner* [Madrid: Cristiandad, 1975], 136).

<sup>100</sup> Sentences like the following are almost commonplace today: "Nothing short of such a transformation will keep the human race from sliding back still further into barbarism" (L. Mumford, op. cit., 4); "This is now regarded as a very irreligious age. But perhaps it only means that the mind is moving from one state to another. The next stage is not a belief in many Gods. It is not a belief in one God. It is not a belief at all—not a conception in the intellect. It is an extension of consciousness so that we may feel God, or, if you will, an experience of harmony, an intimation of the Divine, which will link us again with animism, the experience of unity lost at the in-break of self-consciousness. This will atone for our sin (which means separation); it will be our at-one-ment" (J. S. Collis [*apud* Berry, op. cit., 138–39]); "Yes, we need change, but change so fundamental and far-reaching that even the concept of revolution and freedom must be expanded beyond all earlier horizons" (Ecology Action East, op. cit., 248).

<sup>101</sup> Here is where I see the importance of movements like Center Lebrecht in Paris with its reflections on *Foi et développement* (which also serves as the name of its monthly bulletin).

<sup>102</sup> This has been clearly seen in the vital issue of development by D. Goulet in his *The Cruel Choice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971): "Although the evils of present developmental forms are considerable, it must not be supposed that underdevelopment is a blessing. On the contrary, it is because underdevelopment is such a bad condition that societies are prone to choose imperfect models of development. When famine, disease, and ignorance can be eliminated, it is morally wrong to perpetuate them. And no justification exists for preserving old values if these buttress social privilege, exploitation, superstition, and escapism. Furthermore, Men's cognitive horizons ought not to be limited to tradition on grounds that new knowledge is troubling" (249); the author, though, does not minimize the difficulties of the task: "The important issue, ultimately, is this: the possibility of cultural diversity needs to be safeguarded

there is still much to say and toward which the ecosophic question directs us, as toward a symptom to be treated.

This integral experience is what I call the *cosmotheandric* vision, the third kairological moment of consciousness. In the third chapter, I shall describe this vision on its own terms without, however, spelling out its practical consequences for our concrete present-day situation.

I should again insist that this universal urge, or "catholic" moment, is present in the other two moments, and that all three moments exist in most any given situation. It is at once a question of emphasis, of increasing sensitivity to a unifying myth rather than to partial analyses, and of boundaries, lest we be satisfied with a positive solution for me, or my family, country, religion, or even for Man in general. The problem is a cosmic as well as a human one; indeed, it even involves God.

An example of the need people feel for an open horizon could be found in the interesting shift that has occurred in the self-understanding of modern Christian theology. Not so very long ago, the signs of novelty and exclusivity vouched for the truth of the Christian religion: the creation *ex nihilo* was seen as the exclusively Judeo-Christian contribution; grace was to be found only in Christianity, as well as the love of one's enemies; salvation lay in Christianity alone; the sacraments were the unique means of salvation—*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: outside the Church, no salvation; and so on. Now, almost the opposite is the case. Today Christian theologians emphasize that the biblical myths are universal because they embody the human condition, and that Jesus is Lord because he is a universal figure, the Man for all humanity, and so on. Likewise, modern Westerners like to point out that science is true because it has no nationality, that art is beautiful because beauty is for everybody and not only for a privileged few. Modern Man may still be provincial in many respects, but he abhors elitism, and the great majority pay homage or at least lip service to those who struggle against apartheid, racism, discrimination—in short, against any limitation of those rights considered to be universal.

We could couch this third moment in more philosophico-mythical language and emphasize that it implies the conquest of a new innocence. The *first kairological moment* could be called the ecstatic moment of intelligence: Man knows. He knows the mountains and the rivers; he knows good and evil, pleasant and unpleasant. Male knows female and vice versa. Man knows Nature and knows also his God and all the Gods. He stumbles, he errs, and he corrects his errors by allowing himself to be instructed by the things themselves. Man learns mainly by obedience, that is, by listening (*ob-audire*) to the rest of reality, which speaks to him, addresses him, teaches him. In the ecstatic attitude, the mind is predominantly passive.

The *second moment* is the *enstatic* moment of human intelligence. Man knows that he knows. He knows that he is a knowing Being. But he also senses that this reflective knowledge, like original sin, will sooner or later expel him from Paradise.<sup>103</sup> In Paradise, what is good is

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by deliberate policies. Perplexing questions arise when it must be decided which cultural peculiarities are to be allowed and which eliminated when these interfere with development" (269–70). See also D. Goulet, *A New Moral Order: Studies in Development Ethics and Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974).

<sup>103</sup> The idea is a traditional one in Judaism and Christianity, though mainly defended in Gnostic and mystical climates. It has been revived by contemporary authors like R. C. Zaehner, *The Convergent Spirit* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 44ff., who characterizes original sin as marking "the emergence of Man into full consciousness" (61). See also P. Ricoeur in *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), who writes, "The Yahwist [author of Genesis] would seem to have suppressed all the traits of discernment or intelligence connected with the state of innocence, and to have assigned all of Man's cultural aptitudes to his fallen state. The creation-man becomes, for him, a sort of childman,

good, pure and simple: an apple is an apple. Primal Man takes a straightforward approach that does not desire something "else" or something "more" than what is; indeed, there is no room for anything different. Man exhausts his knowledge in knowing the object. No wonder, then, that iconolatry—in the positive sense of the word—is all that remains of this primordial stage, the last remnant of Man's paradisiacal dwelling. In worshipping the icon, Man is not self-conscious; he is totally absorbed in paying homage and chanting praise to the symbol of the divine. For him, this theophany is so perfect that he can discover no difference between the epiphany and the *theos* manifested in it. And this makes him an idolator in the eyes of the more sophisticated (but no longer innocent) outsider.<sup>104</sup> In other words, what I call the *symbolic difference* is not immediately conscious.<sup>105</sup> The symbolic difference is manifest only existentially—in so far as Man continues to live, to strive, and to worship, unmindful of his previous acts. In the second or reflective moment, however, Man realizes that the symbol both is and is not the thing. It is the thing, because there is no thing "in itself" or "outside" the symbol. It is not the thing, because the symbol is precisely the symbol of the thing, and so not the thing. When Man sees in the apple something "other" than apple, he is on the verge of losing innocence. In point of fact, primordial Man sees in the apple the entire universe—not as something else, but as apple. It is reflective knowledge that confronts Man with himself: first of all, with the conscious knowledge that he knows. He becomes aware not only of the apple but of the fact that he knows the apple. Second, it makes him aware that knowing the apple is not all there is to knowing, because he knows at least that he knows, and therefore that knowing the apple does not exhaust his knowledge. In other words, he becomes aware of the limits of his thinking, and thereby of his own limitations. And he consoles himself by saying that it is then and only then that he knows the apple qua apple. The *identity* of the apple, on which his entire destiny once depended, has become the *identification* of the apple—about which he can say many things, except what the apple ultimately is.

Differentiation begins. Man discovers that the apple is only one thing. It may be a beautiful symbol, but it is not the only one and in particular it is not the symbolized, but only its symbol. The symbolic difference has become an ontological separation. The apple no longer satisfies him because he also wants to know non-apple, and he wants to know more than both apple and non-apple. Ultimately he wants to know everything, that is, God, which is here the symbol that stands for the totality. Only then does he understand (stand under) the temptation of wanting to be like God, because only then does he know himself as non-God. And although he may have heard that he is not-yet God, he does not have the patience to wait and become God at the end of his earthly pilgrimage. He wants to become like God now, and so heeds the Serpent who presents the non-apple discovered in the apple. It does seem that Man must eat the apple, enjoy and destroy it, sacrifice it in order to reach what he has now realized the apple symbolizes. This search for all that is hidden in and beyond the apple characterizes the second moment of human consciousness, the sacrifice of the first innocence.<sup>106</sup>

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innocent in every sense of the word, who had only to stretch out his hands to gather the fruits of the wonderful garden, and who was awakened sexually only after the fall and in shame. Intelligence, work and sexuality, then, would be the flowers of evil" (24).

<sup>104</sup> See my chapter, "Betrachtung über die monotheistischen und polytheistischen Religionen," in *Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr* (Weilheim Obb.: O. W. Barth, 1963), 43–51.

<sup>105</sup> For a consideration of the symbolic difference in terms of liturgy, see my *Worship and Secular Man* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), chap. 1, esp. 20–21.

<sup>106</sup> See, as a single example of the pervasiveness of such an attitude, the following statement written in 1951 by a man of action like Dag Hammarskjöld: "All of a sudden—the Earthly Paradise from which

The *third kairological moment* cannot mean merely the recovery of lost innocence. Innocence is innocent precisely because, once spoiled, it cannot be recovered. We cannot go back to the earthly paradise, much as we might long to do so. The desire itself is the greatest threat, just as the longing for *nirvāṇa* is the main obstacle to its attainment. Equally, longing not to long, desiring nondesire because nondesire is the way, and so on, is self-defeating since it is only another—albeit more sophisticated—desire. The third moment is a conquest, the difficult and painful conquest of a new innocence.<sup>107</sup> It will not do to turn back, nor will it do to forge ahead indefinitely and indiscriminately. We cannot go back, that is, pretend that we do not know, when in point of fact we do know. And knowing that we are knowing Beings makes pure knowledge impossible—unless or until we become the absolute Knower, which by knowing itself knows all Beings and all knowing.<sup>108</sup> But no one can say anything about such a Knower without destroying it, both as knower (it would become the known) and as absolute (it would be related to our knowledge).<sup>109</sup> The first innocence is lost forever.<sup>110</sup>

We cannot push indefinitely ahead either, that is, we cannot pretend that we have a sure and valid knowledge of anything when we know that we do not know the foundations on which that first knowledge rests. We cannot pretend that we know and stop at this, as if it were absolute knowledge, when we also know that we do not know. If we really know that we do not know the foundations on which our knowledge is based, it means that we do not know the truth of what we know; for we know that the truth of what we know depends on an unknown variable. We know our ignorance of the foundation of our knowledge, but this knowledge of our ignorance is neither ignorance nor knowledge. It is not ignorance, for it knows. It is not knowledge, for it has no object; it knows nothing. We cannot know ignorance as such; we cannot know the unknown. If we could, it would cease to be ignorance. If we could know the unknown, it would become known. This knowledge of our ignorance is a knowledge that knows that our knowing does not exhaust knowledge—not because we know ignorance, but because we know that others have a knowledge different from ours and they have sometimes convinced us they were right. This knowledge of our limitations is not

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we have been excluded by our knowledge.” “Reflective knowledge” would be my friendly amendment. But some paragraphs later, when I assume the author was not making any conscious connection with the first sentence, he writes, “A humility which never makes comparisons, never rejects what there is for the sake of something ‘else’ or something ‘more’” (*Markings* [New York: Knopf, 1964], 71).

<sup>107</sup> Is this not the meaning of “whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it” (Mk 10:15)? And is it not this new innocence that makes sense of “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3)? We could quote from Buddhist and Christian sources throughout. See at random: “Maturity: among other things, a new lack of self-consciousness—the kind you can only attain when you have become entirely indifferent to yourself through an absolute assent to your fate” (D. Hammarskjöld, op. cit., 90).

<sup>108</sup> See a text that spans at least two millennia, Aristotle’s *Metaph.* XII.9: “Intendit ostendere quod Deus non intelligit aliud, sed seipsum, in quantum est perfectio intelligentis, et eius quod est intelligere.” St. Thomas, *In Metaph.* Lect. 11, n2614. Or again: “Deus intelligit autem omnia alia a se intelligendo seipsum, in quantum ipsius esse est universale et fontale principium omnis esse, et suum intelligere quaedam universalis radix intelligendi, omnem intelligentiam comprehendens” (St. Thomas, *De subst. separat.* 13 [ed. Mandonnet, 12], commenting on the same text of Aristotle).

<sup>109</sup> See the metaphysical speculations of the *noesis noeseos* of Aristotle, the *svayamprakāṣa* of the Vendāntins, and the light-theology of the Christian Scholastics.

<sup>110</sup> It is good to say and to write: “Knowing ignorance is strength. Ignoring knowledge is sickness.” *Tao-te-Ching* LXXI. But, like the parable of the publican and the pharisee and similar texts, such statements can be made only once. After that, neither the hearer nor the reader can make use of them, except by entering an experience of a different kind.

a direct knowledge, but an awareness born out of the conflict of knowledges: a conflict that we cannot resolve. We are forced to overcome knowledge by nonknowledge, by a leap of . . . faith, confidence, feeling, intuition. In other words, the new innocence resides in overcoming the intellectual despair that ensues when we discover that we cannot break out of the vicious circle either by an act of the intellect or by sheer willpower. The will is too infected by the intellect to maintain such autonomy. If we consciously try to overcome the intellectual *huis clos* by an act of will, it is still the intellect that directs and inspires us. We want to jump over the walls of whatever prison we find ourselves in—escape this vale of tears, this suffering world or dialectical impasse—only once we have discovered the antinomies in which we are immersed. Nobody wants to jump over nonexistent walls. In the state of innocence, heaven has no gates. In the state of guilt, hell is gateless. The new innocence can abolish neither the gates of heaven nor those of hell—but it does not long to cross either threshold. It remains in the *antarikṣa*, in the *metaxú*, the in-between, the positive middle, the *áyus*, the *aión*, the *saeculum*, the world of tempiternal life, neither dreading the realm below nor lured by the kingdom above.

The new innocence is not merely a repetition of the old one. The un-self-conscious attitude of concentrated attention has little to do with the self-forgetfulness of dissipated distraction. The traditional way of expressing this was to say that Man had not completely lost his status, that he was not completely corrupted, but only "wounded," or, as the Scholastics liked to say: *vulneratus in naturalibus et expoliatus ex supernaturalibus* (hurt in his own nature, deprived of his supernatural gifts). There is in Man a kernel of Life that allows for regeneration—which is more than a simple refurbishing. At this depth the third moment, the new innocence, sets in.

Only redemption, or rather, regeneration can generate the new innocence. Whatever existential form this redemption may take, its structure is marked by the experience of the intrinsic limitations of our consciousness. Finding the limits of pure reason has ever been the business of philosophers. The limits of which we are today more and more aware are not only the principle of noncontradiction as the lower limit, and the mystery as the upper limit, but also the limits intrinsic to consciousness itself. It is the experience that thinking not only reveals and conceals, but also destroys when carried to the extreme. Thinking has a corrosive power. The new innocence does not deny thought but transcends it. The familiar words of Augustine concerning time<sup>111</sup> become more than a figure of speech the moment reflective consciousness reflects on them. We can operate with the concepts of God, justice, patriotism, love, abortion, and so on as long as we do not think them through, as long as we respect (because we still believe in) the myth enwrapping the *logos* that articulates them. The new innocence is linked with the new myth. And the new myth cannot be spelled out; it is not yet *logos*. We can see *through* it, although we can assume that subsequent generations may find opaque what is for us transparent.

I could put this same process in psycho-anthropological terms. Since Lévy-Bruhl's description of "participation mystique,"<sup>112</sup> the first stage of human consciousness has been considered to be that of an uncritical nondifferentiation between object and subject, so that in the "primitive" mentality "the unconscious is projected into the object, and the object is introjected into the subject, that is to say, made part of the subject's psychology."<sup>113</sup> The

<sup>111</sup> "What then is time? If nobody asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks, I don't know" (*Confessions* XI.14).

<sup>112</sup> C. Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales des sociétés inférieures*, 1990.

<sup>113</sup> From C. G. Jung's Commentary to the German translation of the *T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih*



remnants of such a state of "participation mystique" are what Carl Jung's analysis and therapy were intended to overcome. His theory of individuation is well-known. In this process, the center of gravity shifts from the conscious Ego to the Self, or the "virtual point between the conscious and the unconscious."<sup>114</sup> Now, abandoning Jung's interpretations, a radical rupture between object and subject would not do either. We have to recover a sense of unity with the real that does not blur all the differences. I would prefer to reserve the term "participation mystique" for this third stage and to call the first one primal or uncritical participation, *sed non est de nominibus disputandum*.

This stage would be the third moment, present since the beginning of human awareness but emerging today with greater vigor after thousands of years of Man's experience on Earth.

The first innocence has been lost—forever. Man's efforts to recover it appear to have failed after centuries, at least for a large part of humanity. Man has lost hope in his own powers. The three fundamentals of historical consciousness—God, Man, World—seem to have collapsed. The gods seem to have betrayed Man, to his great frustration. Not even the anthropocentric humanists have saved Man: human beings continue to fight to the death against one another. We have lost faith in others—and in ourselves too. Even the Earth seems to have repudiated Man, tired of the violence he does to it by exhausting its "riches."

This is the contemporary situation. The old innocence with all its ideals appears to have been defeated. It is here that the need for a new innocence arises with urgency. As we have already said, it is not a question of a return to Paradise or nostalgia for the past, but of living Life in its fullness, with the maturity that comes from the experiences of history and enthusiasm for the constant novelties of Life itself. After millennia spent in a culture of force and war, the only alternative for survival is a culture of solidarity and peace.<sup>115</sup>

I must now refrain from elaborating further so that we do not lose the balance of the book and alter the expository character of the presentation, which is simply intended to introduce this intuition with the minimum of philosophical assumptions. This implies that the description given in the third section of this part does not necessarily demand that one agree with the philosophical or psychological ideas underlying these last few paragraphs.

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(*The Secret of the Golden Flower*) by R. Wilhelm and published in English (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935), 122.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>115</sup> See Panikkar (2002/xlviii; 2003/xxxv).

## THE COSMOTHEANDRIC EXPERIENCE

The so-called ecological sensitivity is only an appendix to the second period; the three real kairological moments are:

- The *primordial* or ecumenic moment, that is, that so-called prereflective awareness in which Nature, Man and the Divine are still amorphously mixed, without any need of deciphering the differences
- The *humanistic* or economic moment, that is, that historical attitude in which the discriminating process of individualization proceeds from the macro- to the micro-sphere
- The *innocent* or cosmotheandric moment, which would maintain the distinctions of the second moment without forfeiting the unity of the first.

Now I would like to concentrate on the description of this holistic experience rather than on its divisions.<sup>1</sup>

In describing this intuition, the expression *theanthropocosmic* might sound more accurate, because *anthrōpos* refers to Man as a Human being, that is, as distinct from the Gods, while *aner* tends to connote the male. This has not, however, always been the case.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>1</sup> We use the neologism "holistic" in this essay as a reminder that Jan C. Smuts's coinage of the term "holism" in the now-classic *Holism and Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1926) was not restricted to the realm of biological evolution, although biology is the field where it has received the most attention. In chapter 5, "General Concept of Holism" ("Summary"), Smuts describes his use of the word in the following cosmotheandric terms: "The close approach to each other of the concepts of matter, life and mind, and their partial overflow of each other's domain, raises the further question whether back of them there is not a fundamental principle of which they are the progressive outcome. . . . Holism (from *hólos* = whole) is the term here coined for this fundamental factor operative toward the creation of wholes in the universe. . . . The idea of wholes and wholeness should therefore not be confined to the biological domain; it covers both inorganic substances and the highest manifestations of the human spirit" (85–86). For an up-to-date review of the concept of "holism," see Arthur Koestler's *Janus, A Summing Up* (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Before Homer, the term did not solely connote the masculine, and in compounds it stood for the human, a sense that is in accordance with its Indo-European root (see the Sanskrit *nā / nar, nārāya...a*) and that the subsequent Latin *vir* did not conserve. So the expression could, and indeed should, be understood in its original meaning of Human being. See the examples and the literature cited in P. Chatraïne, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), and also J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern, München: Francke, 1959), s.v. "ner-(t), aner." The fundamental idea of "Lebenskraft," later broadened to mean courage and strength as well, is important—and may also explain its monopoly by warriors and males. But we better serve the *humanum*

the word *theandric* has a venerable history in Western thought and has always stood for the union of the human and the divine without confusion. Besides, as I already remarked in the introduction, the expression *cosmotheandric* is rather more euphonic than *theanthropocosmic*.<sup>3</sup>

In order to reduce my presentation to its basic elements, I shall just elaborate the basis of this intuition, formulate it, consider some possible objections, and finally briefly describe how this insight sees reality.

### Some Assumptions

The cosmotheandric vision might well be considered the original and primordial form of consciousness. It has, in fact, glimmered since the very beginnings of human consciousness as the undivided vision of the totality. But in its primordiality, it is still an innocent and undiscriminated vision, which is quickly obnubilated by the more glittering regional discoveries, whether physical or metaphysical. It is hardly astonishing to find Man almost intoxicated by his progressive discoveries of the bountiful reality of the worlds above, around, and within. The waves are indeed captivating, the undersea currents and marine fauna surely deserve our careful study, but we might now also turn our attention to the entire ocean.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that envisioning all of reality in terms of three worlds is an invariant of human culture, whether this vision is expressed spatially, temporally, cosmologically, or metaphysically.<sup>5</sup> One sacred text, among many others, says, "He revealed himself as threefold."<sup>6</sup> There is a world of the Gods, another of Men, and a third of those who have passed through the sieve of time; there is Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld; there is the sky, the earth, and the in-between world; there is the past, the present, and the future; there is the spiritual, the psychical and the corporeal, and so on. The classical tripartite division of Man as body, soul, and spirit (*corpus, anima, spiritus*) could be understood as another formulation of the same intuition, provided we do not interpret it in a merely individualistic way by understanding "my" body, soul and spirit. In point of fact, none of these three dimensions are individualized or particularized. Body, soul, and spirit are rather the common denominators of every real being if this latter is not sundered from its vital connections with the entire reality.<sup>7</sup> The

by disentangling these positive values from their monopoly by the masculine half of the human race than by conceding defeat and inventing new terms for "wo-men" and "fe-males."

<sup>3</sup> In fact, although *anthrōpos* was originally androgynous in meaning, it soon became the perquisite of males, and thus the masculine gender prevailed—with but a few exceptions.

<sup>4</sup> See the *pelagus divinitatis* of the Medieval Christian tradition.

<sup>5</sup> The trinity, the *trikāya*, the *sat-cit-ānanda*, the *triloka* of practically every religion, the three spatial, temporal, and anthropological dimensions, etc., seem to be rooted more deeply within reality than any merely heuristic or epistemological device.

<sup>6</sup> *Sa tredhā ātmanāṃ vyakuruta*, says BU I.2.3. Standard translation says "divided" (Hume, Radhakrishnan, Zaehner, Senart, Filippini-Ronconi, etc.), following the context and the ordinary meaning of the compound verb *vyākṛt*, sever, undo, separate; but also expound, explain, declare. See *vyākṛta* (and *avyākṛta*): separated, developed, unfolded, transformed; and the *Sāṃkhya* term for development and creation: *vyākriyā*.

<sup>7</sup> Significantly enough, the classical *corpus, anima, spiritus* (*sōma, psychē, pneuma*) became *anima, animus, spiritus* (*psychē, nous, pneuma*) in later tradition. See William of St. Thierry, *Epist. ad fratres de Monte Dei* Lii.45 (PL 184.315ff.), for example: "The beginning of good in the animal way of life is perfect obedience; progress for it is to gain control of the body and bring it into subjection, perfection for it is when the habitual exercise of virtue has become a pleasure. The beginning of the rational state is to understand what is set before it by the teaching of the faith; progress is a life lived in accordance with that teaching; perfection is when the judgment of the reason passes into a spiritual affection.

Christian dogma of the Mystical Body affirms precisely this: each of us is an integral part of a higher and more real unity, the *Christus totus*.<sup>8</sup> The sentence in the Gospel, "You did it to me,"<sup>9</sup> can be taken as the formula of this universal, and especially human, solidarity.

The vision of reality as One Body can be found almost everywhere: the world as God's body in some spiritualities of Southern India, the Buddhist *Buddhakāya* (Buddha's body), as well as the *dharmakāya* (body of *dharma*), and even *karma* as universal solidarity, are just some samples. On the other hand, the very word "solidarity" comes from *solidus* (solid [body]).

Be this as it may, it would today be an unwarranted and katachronic interpretation to read our more modern categories into the traditional three-story building of these worldviews. It would amount to a methodological error, just the reverse of anachronistic exegesis. If the latter judges the present with obsolete categories of understanding, the former judges the past with present-day, but equally inappropriate, patterns of intelligibility.

I am suggesting, however, that this vision has always been with us, and that it has always been the function of the wise to remind their contemporaries of the whole, and so rescue them from being dazzled by enlightening but partial insights. Yet we might wonder whether humankind would ever have attained its ability to analyze and discriminate without the onesidedness and even exaggeration occasioned by the regional discoveries. *O felix culpa!*<sup>10</sup>

Today, however, this holistic vision seems to be the undimmed hope of an ever-growing number of people and the explicit goal of human consciousness. Man, who has never sought partial truths, now suspects that many traditional convictions may in fact be only partial. Man

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The perfection of the rational state is the beginning of the spiritual state; progress in it is to look upon God's glory with face uncovered [2 Cor 3:18]; its perfection is to be transformed into the same likeness, borrowing glory from that glory [*a claritate in claritatem*], enabled by the Spirit of God" (trans. Theodore Berkeley, OCSO, *The Works of William of St. Thierry*, vol. 4, Cistercian Fathers Series, no. 12 [Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971], 27).

<sup>8</sup> The expression has been popular since Augustine (*passim*). See at random: "quia caput et membra unus Christus" (*Jn. Ps.* LIV [PL 36.629]). And also: "Nemo timet Dominum, nisi qui est in membris ipsius hominis: et multi homines sunt, et unus homo est: multi enim christiani, et unus Christus. Ipsi christiani cum capite suo, quod ascendit in caelum, unus est Christus; non ille unus et nos multi, sed et nos multi in illo uno unum. Unus ergo homo Christus, caput et corpus. Quod est corpus eius? Ecclesia eius, dicente apostolo: Quoniam membra sumus corporis eius *Eph.* 5, 30; et Vos autem estis corpus Christi et membra 1 Cor 12:27" (*Jn. Ps.* CXXVII.3 [PL 37.1679]). Or again: "Dicendum quod, sicut tota Ecclesia dicitur unum corpus mysticum per similitudinem ad naturale corpus hominis, quod secundum diversa membra habent diversos actus, ut Apostolus docet, *Rom.* et 1 Cor, ita Christus dicitur caput Ecclesiae secundum similitudinem humani capitis" (St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* III, a8, q.1, c [also *III Sent.* 13.2.1; *De Veritate* XXIX.45; *Compend. theol.* 214; In 1 Cor. II, lect.1; In *Eph.* I, lect.8; In *Coloss.* I, lect.5). See the encyclical *Unam Sanctam*: "Unam sanctam Ecclesiam . . . quae unum corpus mysticum repraesentat, cuius corporis caput Christus, Christi vera Deus" (Denz-Schön. 870), and from the Second Vatican Council: "As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ . . . He is the image of the invisible God and in Him all things came into Being. He has priority over everyone and in Him all things hold together" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [*Lumen Gentium*], chap. I, sec. 7). St. Ambrose of Milan has a wonderful intuition when, in a different context (he is speaking about the "education of a virgin") he says, "ubi ergo tres isti integri (namely *corpus, anima, spiritus*), ibi Christus est in medio eorum" (*De institutione virginis* 2 [PL 16.309]). He goes on to affirm that the function of Christ is to be "qui hoc tres intus gubernat et regit ac fidei pace componit" (*ibid.*)

<sup>9</sup> See Mt 25:40.

<sup>10</sup> From the hymn sung during the liturgy of the Christian Easter Wake.

has always sought the ultimate reality, and now he suspects that by ruthlessly transcending everything he may very well leave reality behind.<sup>11</sup> Man is not satisfied to attain the peaks if from there he cannot at least see the valleys as well. The entire reality counts, matter as much as spirit, goodness as much as evil, science as much as mysticism, the soul as much as the body. It is not a question of regaining the innocence we had to lose to become who we are, but of conquering a new one.

At every level and period of human consciousness, there has always been the temptation to curtail the real, to concoct shortcuts to synthesis by eliminating whatever parts of reality consciousness could not easily assimilate or manipulate. Very early on, God was deprived of a body, and later of matter altogether, so that he became spirit only. For the same reason—namely, removing imperfections from the Perfect—he was made immutable and immobile. Something similar happened to Man. Haunted by the need to preserve his “dignity,” he first stripped himself of his animality, then his body and senses, and soon enough he put aside his feelings until he became a *res cogitans*, a thinking machine. Despite the optimistic Iranian-Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, the perfection of Man was increasingly “spiritualized” until it called forth an understandably opposite reaction. Certainly it is better to enter the kingdom crippled or maimed than to be cast out entirely,<sup>12</sup> but this lopsided solution need not be the general rule. On the contrary, “to the Man who has will always be given more.”<sup>13</sup> Or again, it is true that no one can serve two masters,<sup>14</sup> but it is equally true that there is ultimately only one master, one whole, one reality, so that no part of the real can or should be annihilated or ignored in favor of another part. Spiritual reductionism is as deleterious as material reductionism. Our task now is to overcome the overbearing reductionism that would confine reality to but one of its constituents. Of course, this can only be done if we overcome our own anthropocentric perspective in the ongoing conquest of the new innocence—which does not fragment the real.

This research is one of the underlying assumptions of the cosmotheandric vision. Earlier we mentioned the *radical relativity* of all reality and distinguished this from an agnostic relativism that would eliminate any certainty and every difference. This radical relativity stands in the background of the cosmotheandric consciousness: we cannot close communication between spheres of the real. Further, this communication cannot be a merely moral link or some dim knowledge of the fact that things are related. In Aristotelian terms, the relations must be as real as the elements they relate. In other words, the ontological *status* of the consciousness linking the different realms of existence must have at least the same consistency as the realms it binds together. So either the universe is made of relations as strong—and as real—as the *relata*, or the latter fall away in a chaotic, disintegrating, and solipsistic universe. And there is more than that, as the *advaita* teaches: relations are the true reality. Poles are in so far as they are poles of reality: a single pole does not exist, it is just an abstraction.

Similarly, the cosmotheandric vision also assumes an experience of the nonindividualistic aspects of knowledge and eventually of the supra-individualistic subject of knowledge. We know, we enjoy knowing, but we are not the private owners of “our” knowledge. My knowl-

<sup>11</sup> See one of the most famous passages in Plotinus, found in the very last lines of his immortal work, the *Ennead* (VI.9.48–51): “This is the life of Gods and of the God like and blessed among men, liberation from the alien that besets us here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of earth, the passing of the solitary to solitary” (S. MacKenna translation). Or, in the more traditional medieval version: “a flight of the alone to the alone” (*phygê mōnou prōs mōnon*).

<sup>12</sup> See Mk 9:42–48.

<sup>13</sup> See Mt 25:14–30.

<sup>14</sup> See Mt 6:24.

edge is real knowledge only inasmuch as it is in me, but it is not mine. Knowledge is not only communion with the object, but also communion among subjects. We can share knowledges just because they exceed the individual level and do not belong to us as a private property.

Our fundamental assumption, then, is the ultimate harmony of reality: it all coheres. In spite of spheres of Being, degrees of knowledge, ontological falls, and ontic hierarchies, a complete vision of reality cannot overlook any of its aspects or sacrifice any "lower" parts in favor of "higher" ones. No amount of distinguishing between "appearance and reality," "*vyavahārika* and *paramārthika*," "*ens a se* and *ens ab alio*," "the way of the wise and the way of fools," "matter and spirit," "creator and creature," "noumenon and phenomenon," "truth and illusion" . . . can blind us to the fact that the other side of the coin, as it were, even if not true, ultimate, existent, or whatever, still has its own peculiar degree of reality to the extent that it manifests itself and can be spoken about. Or, as Vedāntic scholasticism consistently affirms: *brahman* is the ultimate subject of *avidyā* (ignorance). Seeing the rope (of India's famous parable) as a snake may be—is—an illusion, but the snake is real as a snake, even if it is only real in one's imagination. *Viśyā* (wisdom) does not consist in recognizing this world as unreal, but in dis-covering it as the mere appearance, *māyā*, the veil of the real.<sup>15</sup>

I could try to formulate the same idea from a different angle. A glance at the history of consciousness shows it pendulating between an exaggerated unity, which swallows all variety, and an equally extreme atomism (even if couched in dualistic terms), which makes any ultimate intelligibility impossible and breaks down peace and harmony in the bargain. The great masters, and probably the simple folk, kept the balanced vision, but the epigones run to extremes. The cosmotheandric experience tries to regain, on a further turn of the spiral, the positive (and not merely dialectical) middle way between the paranoia of monism and the schizophrenia of dualism. This is what I would like to show.

### Formulation of the Hypothesis

Orthodoxies and traditionalisms of every sort have for over a century severely criticized modernity.<sup>16</sup> They have told us that Man, estranged from the cosmos and cut off from God, cannot survive.<sup>17</sup> The cosmotheandric intuition is in this sense both traditional and contemporary, as it seeks to recover Man's roots, and it goes further. First, it does not stop with Man but penetrates to the very wellsprings of "creation." It would mean reestablishing tradition not only down to the "metaphysical era," but deeper still, to a time "before the world was formed," when Wisdom played with the children of Man and delighted in their company.<sup>18</sup> Second, without ignoring a certain hierarchical order, this vision does not locate the center in God—an impossible task in any case, once Man is aware it is he who does this—but strikes

<sup>15</sup> The "of" here is used in the sense of the subjective genitive. See *Lalitavistara* XIII.175ff., and also *Samyutta Nikāya* IV.54.296.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., the papal encyclicals that attacked "indifferentism," "modernism," "Americanism," "liberalism," etc.: Gregory XVI, *Mirari vos* (1831); Pius IX, *Singulari quadam* (1854), *Gravissimas inter* (1862), *Syllabus* (1864), etc.; Leo XIII, *Libertas, praestantissimum* (1888), *Testem benevolentiae* (1889); Pius X, *Lamentabili* (1907), *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (1907), *Sacrorum antistitum* (1910), *Quadragesimo anno* (1931); Pius XII, *Humani generis* (1950).

<sup>17</sup> See for instance the significant success of the books by R. Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, translated by M. Pailis and R. Nicholson (London: Luzac and Co., 1962); F. Schuon, *L'oeil du coeur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950); J. Needleman, *The Sword of Gnosis* (Los Angeles: Metaphysical Press, 1974); Sherrard (1992, 1995); Nasr (1981).

<sup>18</sup> See Prov 8:31.

a balance whereby the three dimensions find their center each moment in the free interplay among them. Third, it does not "freeze" tradition as if it were immobile, but it carries on tradition and brings it to perfection. Let me try to explicate this.

The cosmotheandric principle could be expressed by saying that the divine, the human, and the earthly are the three irreducible dimensions that constitute the real, that is, any reality inasmuch as it is real. It does not deny that the abstracting capacity of our mind can, for particular and limited purposes, consider parts of reality independently; it does not deny the complexity of the real and its many degrees. But this principle reminds us that the parts are parts, and that they are not just accidentally juxtaposed, but essentially related to the whole. In other words, the parts are real *parti-cipations* and are to be understood not according to a merely spatial model, as books are part of a library or a carburetor and a differential gear are parts of an automobile, but rather according to an organic unity, as body and soul, or mind and will belong to a Human being: they are experienced as parts, but they cannot be "parted" from the whole without thereby ceasing to be what they truly are. A soul without a body is a mere entelechy; a body without a soul is a corpse; a will without reason is a mere abstraction; and reason without will an artificial construct of the mind, and so on. They are constitutive dimensions of the whole, which permeates everything that is, as the limbs of a living Body.

What this intuition emphasizes is that the three dimensions of reality are neither three modes of a monolithic undifferentiated reality, nor three elements of a pluralistic system. There is rather an intrinsically threefold relation that manifests the ultimate constitution of reality. Everything that exists, any real Being, presents this triune constitution expressed in three dimensions. I am not only saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else: the radical relativity or *pratityasamutpāda* of the Buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real. No word can be understood in isolation. All words are relational. We could not know how to give a meaning to God without His creatures. Goodness implies evil. The earth needs either water or sun or an empty space. Time needs space, and vice versa. Time manifests eternity. All of these relations have most often been interpreted dialectically, mainly because they are seen as binary relations. The cosmotheandric vision overcomes dialectics because it discovers the trinitarian structure of everything—and that third dimension, the divine, is not just a "third" opposition, but precisely the *mysterium coniunctionis*. Truth, for instance, is not the opposite of error, as if only these two extremes existed. The *continuum* runs from the one to the other. All things are, as it were, androgynous and ambivalent because they are in fact trinitarian. The relations that pervade the universe penetrate the innermost chambers of every being. The cosmotheandric intuition is not a tripartite division among beings, but an insight into the threefold core of all that is, in so far as it is. Let us briefly describe these three dimensions.

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- Every being has an *abyssal* dimension, both transcendent and immanent. Every being transcends everything—including, and perhaps most pointedly, "itself," which in truth has no limits. It is, further, infinitely immanent, that is, inexhaustible and unfathomable. And this is so not because the limited powers of our intellect cannot pierce deeper, but because this depth belongs to every being as such. To place limits on Being—qua Being—is to destroy it. To isolate a being (*ens*)—were this even possible—would amount to stifling it, killing it, cutting the umbilicus that unites it to Being (*Esse*). In harmony with the greater proportion of human traditions, I call this dimension "divine," but this does not imply that another name would not or could not do. The basic perception here is the infinite inexhaustibility

of any real being, its ever-open character, its mystery, its freedom, another language might say. Through every real being breathes a wind of reality, a *prāna* (vital breath), as it were, permeating every fiber of that being and making it real not only by connecting it with the entire reality, but also by suspending it over a fathomless ground that makes growth, life, and freedom possible. Everything that is, is because it shares in the mystery of Being and/or Nothingness, as some may prefer to say.<sup>19</sup>

This divine dimension is not an umbrella superimposed over beings, nor a merely extrinsic foundation for them, but the constitutive principle of all things, comparable to the act of existence that confers existence on beings without being, properly speaking, an ingredient of "being."<sup>20</sup> This means that God does not enter into the *formal* composition of a Being because, in this terminology, God is not a formal principle (*causa formalis*) nor is real being reducible to its form.<sup>21</sup> Everything that there is, is *sat* (being).

Were it not for this dimension, ultimately no change would be possible, for there would be no "room" for it. Or again, were it not for this dimension, every particular change would amount to a total transmutation of the changing being, so that nothing would really change because there would be no continuity whatsoever. Some systems understandably prefer to call this dimension nothingness, emptiness, the vacuum that makes all the rest possible. Were it not for this dimension, any change would entail a total alienation, for no being would be flexible enough to allow for both variation and continuity.

In sum, every being is a mystery and it has a dimension of *infinitude*, and therefore of *freedom*, that gives a unique dignity to it.

• Every real being, further, is within the range of consciousness; it is thinkable, and by this very fact tied up with human awareness. Again, there is no need here to quibble over words or with them. We cannot speak, or think, or affirm anything whatsoever—positively or negatively—about anything that is not connected with our consciousness. The very act of affirming or negating anything establishes a connection, if none were there already. We may speak about a hypothetical astronomical body of unknown chemical constitution orbiting some unknown sun. Yet this sentence makes sense only in so far as it speaks from within known parameters projected onto an equally knowable hypothesis. In other words, the waters of human consciousness wash all the shores of the real—even if Man cannot penetrate the deepest *pelagus ignotus*—and by this very fact, Man's Being enters into relation with the whole of reality. The entire field of reality lives humanized in him. The transparent character of consciousness belongs not only to the Man who knows, but also to the object known. We could call this a dimension of *consciousness*, but we may also call it a *human* dimension, for, whatever consciousness may be, it is manifest in and through Man. Even if we defend the possibility of a consciousness utterly independent of Man, this very affirmation—made by any Human being—already contravenes such an independence.

This does not mean that everything can be reduced to consciousness or that consciousness is everything. The cosmotheandric insight declares precisely that the three constitutive dimensions of the real are not mutually reducible; hence the material world and the divine aspect are irreducible to consciousness alone. And yet both are pervaded by, and in a certain sense co-extensive with, consciousness. As the church fathers liked to say in the commentaries

<sup>19</sup> As remarked at the beginning, I am not espousing a particular metaphysics that limits "Being" to a single sense. Non-Being, Nothingness, *śūnyatā*, or any other symbol would do at this level of discourse.

<sup>20</sup> See Thomas Aquinas: "Creatum autem est dare esse," in *I Sent.* d.38, q.1, a.1.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, Thomas Aquinas, *C. Gentis*, l.26.



on the book of Exodus,<sup>22</sup> we can see only the back of God, when he has already passed; we can discover God's "footprints," but we cannot see God face-to-face. Or as philosophers have often observed: matter is matter because it is opaque to the mind. So too, the individual thing qua individual is not knowable, because we cannot compare it with anything else; the cosmos is cosmos because it is not Man or Spirit, and so on.

This human dimension of reality does not mean that a particular entity about which Man is not aware, or not yet aware, does not exist or is not real. It does not mean, for example, that Pluto did not exist before 1930, but that Pluto is and was real to the extent that it enters into a relationship with human consciousness. It is real as a planet since 1930, it was real as a probable planet since the beginning of this century, and as a possible one for at least two millennia. It was real as a possible celestial body since Man discovered the possibility of celestial bodies, and it was real as a body or a being in so far as body and being have ever been objects of consciousness. Even a hypothetical discourse on Pluto as a non-Being relates it to human consciousness by this very ontic opacity.

The natural and unavoidable question still remains: did Pluto exist as a celestial body before human beings existed on Earth? No one denies that we can, and I would even add that we must, think that Pluto existed, like all the other planets, long before human life was possible on Earth. In other words, Pluto is thinkable as an astronomical body whose existence is independent of human consciousness. But its very thinkability already relates it—though not necessarily causally—to human consciousness.

All this does not mean, obviously, that Pluto—or any other being, for that matter—has to be known or thinkable by any or every conscious human being. It simply means that thinkability and knowability as such are features of all that is. To put it in a more controversial way: surely *esse est percipi* (being is perceptibility), as Hume said, but being implies corporeity too, according to our hypothesis. Reality, anyway, is "more" than being, and being itself is more than perceptibility.

As a result of the experiments of Piaget and others, we may accept that a child in his "pre-conceptual" period does not assume that a watch hidden by a handkerchief still lies underneath it.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, he does not even explore this possibility by lifting up the cloth. But he soon learns that the watch is there, as soon as somebody else, or he himself, lifts the cloth; this comes as a major discovery. I suspect that the adult is still deeply affected by this discovery and makes the same unconscious assumption when he deals with a fundamentally new awareness. We assume that Pluto was there even before we lifted up the handkerchief of distance by means of the telescope, as if consciousness were exactly the same as sensory awareness. I am not saying that Pluto was not there before its "discovery." I am saying that the problem does not arise before it is a meaningful problem.

Just as in the first dimension I was not affirming that every being is divine, so here I am not affirming that every being is conscious, either by taking that particular being as a divine substance in the first case, or as subject of consciousness in the second. It all depends on what we mean by a being: as a private property that that being alone "possesses" (excluding all the rest) or makes it unique (its inclusive uniqueness); its differentiation (from others) or its identity (with itself). In other terms, it is all a question of whether we use the principle of singularity or the principle of individuality to determine what a being is.<sup>24</sup> I am saying,

<sup>22</sup> Ex 33:22–27; see especially Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>23</sup> See J. Piaget, *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child* (London, 1928), and also *Psychology of Intelligence* (London, 1950).

<sup>24</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," in

however, that every being has a constitutive dimension of consciousness, even if my understanding of that being does not hypostasize consciousness in "him," but somewhere else: in "me" knowing "him," for instance, or in consciousness in general.<sup>25</sup> Not only were it impossible to us to know a being if it were not somehow related to consciousness, but this relation is also constitutive of that very being. Consciousness permeates every being. Everything that is, is *cit* (consciousness, intellect).

Were it not for this dimension, reality would not be knowable and awareness would be a superimposed and extrinsic characteristic. Still, "consciousness" must not be mistaken for "rational conscience."

- Every being, finally, stands in the World and shares its secularity. Nothing enters human consciousness without at once entering into relation with the World. Again, this relation is not merely external or accidental: anything that exists has a constitutive relation with matter/energy and space/time. Even if we grant the possibility of an extramundane existence, even if we accept the reality of an atemporal and acosmic mystical experience, not only do we use an earthly language, but the very act of negating any relation with the world already constitutes a relation, albeit a negative one. In a word, extra- or ultra-mundanity is already a secular feature and has the *saeculum* as its referent.

For example, let us assume that truth and angels are real entities, each in its proper order. Both, I submit, have a *worldly* dimension. The epistemological concept of truth, as well as the ontological idea of truth, can only be meaningful within a World, that is, within the range of worldly experience, even if we extrapolate afterward. Furthermore, truth, in so far as it belongs to epistemology, is not only connected with Man's mind but with Man's objects, material or imaginary, which also already belong to this World. A metaphysical truth—whatever this may be—is only true if it is really *kata*-physical. Something similar can be said regarding a "heavenly" angel. Even if we disregard the etymological fact that "angel" means an envoy, one sent precisely to Men and to the Earth, the very existence of an angel, an *asura* (evil spirit), a *deva* (deity), an *apsara* (nymph), a spirit, is linked to the destiny of Man and the World, and thus intimately related to that World. Even if we say that an angel is above matter and beyond space and time, these references already tie it to our World, and this link is a constitutive one. Even if the angel were not for us, he would nonetheless be with us, as being part of the whole reality, therefore in communion with all the other parts. Reality is certainly not a *pan* (πᾶν), a *solidum* without parts, it is a *panta* (πάντα), a *totum*; not an agglomerate, nor one single being or Being.

One of the most valuable hypotheses that the economic moment has furnished presents reality as twofold: on the one side, the clear and cogent domain of spiritual ideas and, on the other side, a material precipitate of that intellectual domain. Plato in Greece and Śaṅkara in India could be adduced as exemplars, differing scholarly interpretations of these two thinkers notwithstanding. But this pattern of intelligibility is ultimately reductionistic and has its limits. It divides reality into two, and the cleft—even if it is considered only epistemological—soon proves insurmountable. The cosmotheandric vision, by contrast, would consider the first dimension as an equally constitutive element of every Being. There are not two worlds. There may be as many distinctions and ontological gradations as we deem necessary, but

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*Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Festschrift for Professor Raymond Klibansky (Bruxelles: Center National de Recherches de Logique, 1975).

<sup>25</sup> The Aristotelian-Augustinian-Scholastic notion of *noûs poietikos* or *intellectus agens*, especially as understood by Islamic thinkers, could shed some light here.

ultimately there is only one reality—despite the drawbacks of this latter term, which in fact stresses the *res*, the cosmic dimension. Everything that is, is *res* and *ānanda* (joy, happiness).

Am I saying that God is worldly, or abolishing the distinction—so dear to civilized Man—between Nature and Culture? Or between World and Person? No, I am not abolishing these distinctions, not even entering now into a discussion of them. I am only saying that a God without the World, as a matter of fact, does not exist. I am saying that the cosmic dimension is not a superfluous appendix to the other two dimensions, but equally constitutive, both of the World and of each *real* part of the whole.

We mentioned earlier the correlation between microcosm and *makranthropos*, which is also one of the pillars of the Upaniṣadic experience. To each part of the human body corresponds a part of the material universe.<sup>26</sup> This correlation is essential in *tantra*, but equally present in the West.<sup>27</sup> Man can become everything not only because he can grasp everything, but also because he is in strict correlation with the material World. The relationship could not be more intimate. And it is a two-way intercourse: "If Man is a microcosm, the World is a *makranthropos*."<sup>28</sup>

A powerful metaphor used by a Zen master may give us another glimpse into this intuition of the polarity between Man and Nature. Describing the effect of the discipline of simplifying one's life, he says, "Here is shown bare the most beautiful landscape of your birthplace."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps only one's birthplace has that power, that aura of life that makes it appear not separate, not just a beautiful parcel of land or indeed anything "outside" of us; but part and parcel of ourselves, a continuation or rather an extension of our very being. Such a landscape is more than a geographic mark or a historical remark: it is the most inner and essential part of ourselves, the very body or embodiment of one's own feelings, of our own most personal discovery of the World, of the environment that not only "shapes" our lives but actually is our proper field of existence. The roots that link us to the World lie there; it is there that we are in touch with the umbilicus that still gives us life and makes us human. It is perhaps one of the few places where one cannot be mean or insincere, and where some faint hope of attaining a new innocence still remains. That place is part of me inasmuch as I am part of it. There is nothing exclusively poetic or aesthetic about this experience. Poets, painters, and artists of every sort may be more sensitive to this feeling—they are our antennae—but the most ordinary person is surely open to its power.

I am saying that a purely immaterial being is as much an abstraction as an exclusively material one, and thus that a monistic spiritualism is as one-sided as a monistic materialism. I am saying that there are no disembodied souls or disincarnated Gods, just as there is no matter, no energy, no spatiotemporal World without divine and conscious dimensions. This does not mean that "God" has a body like ours; it rather means that God is not without matter, space, time, body, and that every material thing that is, is God's, or more precisely, God's thing, God's own World.<sup>30</sup>

We are so accustomed to dividing reality that when we say "God," or body or matter, we think about separate, independent entities, without realizing that such entities are just abstractions. They are concepts, not even symbols.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., *Puruṣa Sūtra* (RV X.90) and *Puruṣa* (BU II.3.1–6).

<sup>27</sup> See R. Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity* (New York: Seabury, 1982), 75ff.

<sup>28</sup> See the text quoted from De Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole*, op. cit., where Pico speaks of this congruence or correspondence.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted by D. T. Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London, 1960), 46, as reported by Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967), 233.

<sup>30</sup> See Aristotle: "All [things] naturally have something divine" (*Et. Nic.* 1153b32).

Were it not for this spatiotemporal dimension, reality simply would not exist. Everything would be but the dream of a nonexistent dreamer who has only dreamed a dream, who has dreamed that he was dreaming. Were it not for matter and energy, or space and time, not only would human discourse and thinking be impossible, but God and consciousness would also recede into sheer nothingness and meaninglessness. The final foundation for the belief that something exists is that the World exists; the ultimate basis for Man's hope is the existence of this World that is immediately given to us. Whatever answer one may give to the ultimate *why* of Leibniz and Heidegger, the question rests on the World that sustains it and makes the asking possible. Why anything exists can be a question only if that why exists, that is, if it already "sticks out" of nothingness.<sup>31</sup> It is of great significance that the homeomorphic question in the *Upaniṣad* is more person-related than the Western one.<sup>32</sup>

In short, all beings have a material dimension that makes them offer resistance to any reduction of the mind. If God and consciousness permeate matter, then matter in turn permeates the divine and the human. Its symbol is the *cosmos*.

Having said this, we should clarify our language, which is individualizing and in general objectifying. When we say God, Man, and Cosmos, we have in mind three separate beings; we confuse distinction with separation.

Reality is not God, Man, and World or Infinite, Consciousness, and Matter as three intrinsically related beings. Reality is neither composite nor divisible. Reality *is*; but what it *is* that we are is discovered as a dynamic movement or as a relatedness. The *metanoia* we have spoken about as an "overcoming of the mental" (rather than a change of mentality) allows us to perceive the relational movement—the *perichorēsis* as it was known in Christian tradition—which is the cosmotheandric dance of reality.

### Some Objections

All this may encounter two main objections. The first would say that, by connecting everything intrinsically to everything else, we divest things of their individuality and toss everything indiscriminately into the same sack. The second objection would assert that it is simply false to suppose that one being could not exist without another.

In the final analysis, however, both objections are based on an epistemology that is acritically detached from any ontology. Knowledge is then regarded as an activity of a mind that is independent, that is, separated from our being complete and from being *per se*. It must therefore justify itself. One classic example is the Kantian approach regarding "synthetic a priori judgments." It is thus no longer a question of reflecting how Man, who is part of reality, comes to realize this, but of analyzing how the mind arrives at a judgment that is neither given in the analysis of the subject nor is the fruit of the empirical experience.<sup>33</sup>

Without wishing to criticize Kant's brilliant discovery, as far as we are concerned we may say that one collateral effect of the doctrine of the independence of reason is that we do not need sensible experience in order to formulate a truth since, as a result of such division (between ontology and epistemology), the truth (which then belongs to epistemology) must be necessary and universal. Knowledge becomes not only independent from sensible

<sup>31</sup> See the description of Richard of St. Victor in his *De Trinitate* IV.12 (PL 196.937): "Quid est enim existere, nisi ex aliquo sistere?"

<sup>32</sup> See *KenU*, etc.

<sup>33</sup> Kant, we must remember, aimed to provide a philosophical foundation for the scientific discoveries of Newton, which means that within these confines it represents an enormous step forward.

reality but the knowledge of an object "discovered" in a concept. Knowledge of A is A and only A. At best, the concept of A enables algebraic operations that will make it possible to establish logical connections with other concepts, but not ontological connections with any other entity that is not A or epistemologically related to it. In short, such an epistemology, which is exclusively logical, cannot acknowledge a holistic knowledge of reality—which is not manifestly conceptual.<sup>34</sup>

The first objection says: Given that "A is A," therefore "A is A by virtue of everything that distinguishes A from Non-A." The concept "A" implies its specific difference; as a consequence, to pour everything into such a universal concept as Being would lead to monism and to the loss of the individuality of the beings; and hence to deduction, the tool of "modern science."

This objection is valid within a particular thought pattern. Here, however, an intercultural reflection may prove useful.

When we think, in fact, we may follow either of two patterns of intelligibility, primarily governed by the principles of noncontradiction and identity. Elsewhere I have argued that the bulk of modern Western thought is governed by the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction and that something similar could be said regarding Indic culture and the principle of identity.<sup>35</sup>

Applying the principle of noncontradiction, we tend to isolate "things" and thus truncate their total reality by artificially severing them from what they really are, something that goes beyond concepts.<sup>36</sup> By affirming that "A is A" because it is-not B (B being not A), we strip from A all that is not A (not-A) and we isolate A from all other beings for fear that A may be confused with B. A remains "definite" but also isolated. A is identified with its specific concept and is not seen as a symbol (and image) of Reality. An apple is not a tree because the tree is not the apple; but that apple without a tree is an abstraction; it is not the real apple, even though the (specific) properties of the apple are not those of the tree. The matrix of every being is Being itself and if we separate the being from Being we mutilate the reality of that particular being. The concept of an apple is not the concept of an apple tree, but the real apple implies the apple tree. Following the principle of noncontradiction, A is more A the more it can be distinguished and separated from non-A. We know by differentiation and by division, "composing and dividing," as St. Thomas said before Descartes. Is this knowledge by division perhaps the knowledge of good and evil? As an aside, that would be a theological doubt.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, by applying the principle of identity, we tend to be blind to differences, throwing together really different dimensions of the real and confusing identity with the denial of differences. Following the principle of identity, A is the more A, the more it is identified with itself. We know here by identification, participation, union. By knowing

<sup>34</sup> While traditional logic takes the object as a given fact, transcendental (Kantian) logic creates its object—which can thus represent universality and the desired necessity.

<sup>35</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Le fondement du pluralisme herméneutique dans l'hindouisme," *Demitizzazione e immagine*, ed. E. Castelli (Padua: Cedam, 1962), 243–69; revised and reprinted in *Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr*, op. cit., 833ff.

<sup>36</sup> See the interesting and autobiographical confession of Edgar Morin in the preface of his *Le paradigme perdu*, op. cit., reacting against the dominant theory of Man based not only on the separation, but also on the opposition between Man and animal, culture and nature—and saying that for the twenty years of his academic "formation," he had to repress his desire to overcome "the ghetto of the human sciences," in order to articulate an "anthropo-cosmology." See the bibliography at the end of that book.

<sup>37</sup> See the interesting witness of a nonphilosopher who has gone the way existentially: "We [Westerners], on the other hand, have been 'turned around,' and we are always aware of ourselves as spectators. This spectatorship is a wound in our nature, a kind of original sin. . . . Once we cease to 'stand against' the world, we think we cease to exist" (T. Merton, op. cit., 245).

the apple, we think we do know the apple tree as well. We are not interested in knowing the non-apple in order to get a better knowledge of the apple itself. There is no need to stress further that identity and difference are correlative.<sup>38</sup> The one implies the other, but, this notwithstanding, they are mutually exclusive. This provides another example of that polarity that is constitutive of reality. In the first case, I can only identify two things if I can differentiate them from everything else; in the other case, I can only differentiate two things if I can show that they are not like each other.

The time has come to integrate these two principles. Every knowing process is a discriminating enterprise, but it has equally a synthetic function. This is to say that in order to know what a being is, we should not maim the Being that is. On the other hand, we also have to leave room for the differences. Only the combination of the two principles can provide a satisfactory answer in which identity is not annihilated by difference, or difference swallowed up in identity. It must be immediately added that Being is not a concept, therefore the concept of Being is not the same as Being. We have elsewhere dealt with the "symbolic consciousness" and the ontology as the proper *logos* of Being: we perceive Being through our *logos*, which cannot be reduced to reason (*ratio*), although reason is an essential element of the *logos*.

An elephant is not a man, but both *are*, though in different ways. The elephant *is* and the Man *is*, but the one is not the other. The elephant is not-man and the Man is not-elephant, but both participate in Being. It would be incorrect to say (or to think) that the elephant is Man or the Man is elephant. However, we cannot sever the *is* from the elephant or from the man, we cannot manipulate things as we like best. Man implies being-man. So we may say that *man-is* cannot be identified with *elephant-is*; but denying humanness to the elephant (the elephant is not-man) does not at all entail denying its *is*-ness (the elephant still *is*). In this sense we cannot say, "The elephant is-not man." We can and we must say, on the contrary, that "the elephant is not-man."<sup>39</sup> The *is* distinguishes as much as it unites them. In the elephant's *is* there is room for everything that is, because the *is* is predicated in many ways, as already Aristotle formulated.<sup>40</sup> The elephant and the Man participate in Being by analogy. So, if we want to say that the elephant is, we must add everything that the elephant is, that is, all of its

<sup>38</sup> See T. R. V. Murti, who, speaking of "the Structure of the *mādhyaṃika* dialectic," says, "Relation has to perform two mutually opposed functions; as connecting the two terms, in making them relevant to each other, it has to *identify* them; but as connecting the two, it has to *differentiate* them" (*The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* [London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960], 138). In a note, he quotes F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930): "Relation pre-supposes quality, and quality relation. Each can be something neither together with, nor apart from, the other; and the vicious circle in which they turn is not the truth about Reality" (Murti, *ibid.*, 21). See also Dionysius, *De Div. Nom.* XI.2: "Now, the first thing to say is this; that God is the First and Very Peace of all Peace, both in general and in particular, and that He joins all things together in a unity without confusion whereby they are inseparably united without any interval between them, and at the same time stand unmixed each in its own form, not losing their purity through Being mingled with their opposites nor in any way blunting the edge of their clear and distinct individuality . . . that one and simple nature of the Peaceful Unity which unites all things to Itself, to themselves and to each other, and preserves all things, distinct and yet interpenetrating in a universal cohesion without confusion." See also BG IX.4-5.

<sup>39</sup> See my interpretation of the famous *catuṣkoṭi* of Buddhism at *El Silencio del Dios*, op. cit., 109-23 [Vol. V, *Opera Omnia*].

<sup>40</sup> The classical *τὸ δὲ ὅν λέγεται μὲν πολλὰ ὅς; ἐν αὐτῷ πολλὰ ἑστὶν ὁμοίως*; *ens autem multis quidem dicitur modis*; "Being is said in many ways"; the *pollachōs*, the many ways or multiplicity, refers to the *lēgetai*, and to the *logos*, the saying of the Being, because (as the continuation of the text itself suggests: *ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἑνὶ, sed ad unum*) Being itself, before its saying is *ekam eva advitīyam*, "one only without a second" (CU VI.2.1; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.2 [297].1003a33).

constitutive relationships. The beings are relations, and so is Being. This is the fundamental intuition in the cosmotheandric experience.

Most theistic systems, to put another example, affirm the difference between God and His creatures by stressing His transcendence; but they will equally affirm God's *sui generis* identity with creation, thus underscoring His immanence. God is more immanent to any creature than the creature's own identity (the identity with itself), so that, if we were to subtract God from that creature, the latter would collapse into utter nothingness.<sup>41</sup>

What I am saying is that the links that connect everything with everything else constitute those very things. When affirming that a piece of bread is cosmotheandric in so far as it is real, for instance, I am not saying that it is a piece of bread plus many other things, namely, a part of God and a portion of Man, thereby blurring all differences. The piece of bread is a piece of bread, which implies, first of all, that it is a piece and not the totality of bread. Further, that bread is also a piece of all those things that serve as food. The real bread of the piece of bread is more than an isolated monad, and its "breadness" (if by this we understand all that distinguishes it from nonbread) does not exhaust all that the bread is. The piece of bread is the bread of the piece, and this bread (of the piece) is the *is* of the bread.

The *is* of the piece of bread is intrinsically connected with everything that is. To be sure, the piece of bread is a piece of Being and has to be dealt with as such. But individualizing the piece—whatever piece—cannot and must not excommunicate it from the communion of beings and its *sui generis* participation in Being. Analytical thinking, important as it is, cannot overshadow the fact that it conveys meaning only within a given synthetic framework, whether conscious or not.

I would like to linger for a moment with this example, not allowing it also to exemplify the meaning that the Eucharist acquires from this perspective. The consecration of the bread is not so much the transformation of the bread into Christ as the transformation of Christ into bread. The consecrated bread does not cease to be bread. On the contrary, it becomes integral bread, a bread that contains the entire reality, a bread that is divine and material and human at the same time. It is the revelation of the cosmotheandric nature of reality. When we break bread in everyday life, we tend to be forgetful of this fact, and we alienate ourselves from this integral experience. The Eucharist reminds us of the whole and makes it real for us: "This is the Body of Christ." It is well known that this very expression indicated primarily the church, that is, the body of believers, the community of all Men. The Mystical Body does not mean just the small group of so-called believers. It extends to the "breadth" of the entire universe in its proper status. That this proper status is said to be reached at the end of time amounts to one interpretation that depends on a certain cosmology, namely that which understands the *eschaton* in historical terms, and the "end" of time as the fullness of linear time. We may come to have a tempiternal understanding of this fullness, however, which would allow the presence of the whole to fill our lives—precisely in the present.

The answer to the second objection, which contests the inter-in-dependence of every being, has to do with the nature of the mind, which cannot, in and of itself, distinguish between the "actuality" and the "possibility" of any entity without an external empirical criterion.

<sup>41</sup> See the often quoted (and not always sufficiently understood) phrase of Augustine: "interior intimo meo et superior summo meo" [more inward to me than my most inward part, and higher than my highest] (J. G. Pilkington translation, *Confessions* III.6.11; also Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.8, a.1; I, q.105, a.5; Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis* III.7: "Nostri non sumus: ergo quoad licet obliviscamur nosmetipsos ac nostra omnia. Rursum, Dei sumus: illi ergo vivamus et moriamur" (*Opera Calvini*, ed. Brunsvigae, 1864, 2:col. 505–6).

No amount of thinking about a possible one hundred rupees enables me to know whether the money is actually in my pocket or not.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, we often tend to extrapolate without proper foundation, that is, to impose on the sphere of existence what belongs only to the realm of the ideally or intellectually thinkable; we thus fall into a *metabasis eis allo genos*, a severe dislocation of genres that occasions misunderstanding. All this is said, recall, in order to obviate the objection that maintains that, whereas some beings cannot be without another, some beings do exist that do not require the existence of another. Certainly, a living human body cannot exist without a heart, but a living heart can exist without oak trees; and, although an oak tree requires appropriate soil, it does not demand the existence of human justice. I do not deny that a being could be or even can be without another. I do not deny that birds could be without oceans, although they could not be without air. But we are not dealing here with mere possibilities but with actualities, so that if beings A and B exist at all, there is in point of fact no A without B or any B without A, even if one or both could be without the other. Man may be without the oak tree, and the oak tree without Man, but, as a matter of fact, the former does not exist without the latter, and vice versa. We should take seriously the fact that the knowledge of what is does not coalesce with the prediction of what could be. Let us consider a case: a theistic system may assert that while there is no World without a Creator, there can be a God without any creation. A theist can certainly think of a God who does not require the existence of any creatures in order to be real, but this "God" does not exist, because the actual God, the God that in fact exists, is God with creatures. That God "can be" (without creatures) is a phenomenological feature of the theistic concept of God, not an ontological statement about "Him."

A further phenomenological remark may be pertinent here. A rigorous *epoché* works in two directions: it brackets the eidetic intuition from the burden of existence, thus freeing essences from the pangs of existential birth, but it also liberates existences from responsibilities beyond their competence.<sup>43</sup> In a theistic conception, God may very well be defined phenomenologically as *id quo maius cogitari nequit* (that than which nothing greater can be thought).<sup>44</sup> Further, God can be described as that "necessary being" that can exist *a se*, by itself (i.e., which does not need any other being in order to exist), whereas the creature or contingent being can be defined as that which can exist only *ab alio*, only if grounded in another or in something else. We would then have to say that a phenomenological analysis of our consciousness when thinking "God" or "creature" yields self-sufficiency in the first case and non-self-sufficiency in the second. A necessary Being without creatures is thinkable; a contingent Being without a Ground is unthinkable. We could further add that a necessary being *can* exist without creatures and a contingent being *can-not* exist without a ground of existence. This may help to clarify our concept phenomenologically. It might even help us to recognize the validity of a qualified ontological argument, but it cannot justify extrapolation into the universe of existences. In other words, the statements "God can be without World" and "World cannot be without God" may be valid phenomenological observations, but they are not ontological affirmations about God or World.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the ontological argument, it suffices to mention: Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery* (Lasalle, IL: Open Court, 1965), and John H. Hick and Arthur C. McGill, *The Many-Faced Argument* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), both of which have useful bibliographies.

<sup>43</sup> By *epoché* we mean, after Husserl, the suspension of judgment, setting aside any attribute of a being that does not belong to its pure essence. The phenomenological description aims at the pure essences, with no regard to the relationships of a thing with anything "outside itself," e.g., its existence in the actual world. See Panikkar (2000/XXVII).

<sup>44</sup> Anselm, *Proslogion* II.



Similarly, although I can think of a World without humans, this in no way proves that there is such a World without humans. It proves I can think of such a World, but it does not prove its existence. In fact, such a World (without humans) does not exist. Someone could retort that certainly this is the case now, but millions of years ago there was an astronomical universe without Human beings. Without entering into polemics by declaring that the concept of time implied here is not valid, and without invoking the theory of relativity in order to deny such an absolute diachrony, one can respond, first, that the statement itself operates in a human consciousness in which World and Man coexist; and, second, that if we introduce the past, we have to introduce the future as well, which invalidates the objection. If we affirm, "There was a time,  $t_1$ , in which there was a universe without humans," we have to complete the statement by saying that from the perspective of time  $t_1$ , "There will be a time,  $t_2$ , in which the universe will be with humans." Now our point is precisely that the time of which we are conscious in one way or another is  $t = t_1 + t_2$ , for  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  are only partial times. So we may still say, "There is no time,  $t$ , in which the universe is without humans." Time is not only time past.<sup>45</sup>

Yet the *pūrvapakṣin* (the one who, in a philosophical debate, upholds the opposite opinion) might then retort that he was merely claiming that "There was a time without humans" and not that "there is such a time." This objection can be met by relaying that this was only past from the perspective of the present (in which there is no World without humans). This amounts to affirming, "Now, we can imagine a was (an empty time, as it were, for no Man was there) in which there were no Human beings, but there was a World." And this is true only as a was, not as an is. Which is why we instinctively say, "There can be a time in which there is an Earth and no humans, but as far as we are concerned, there is in truth no World without humans."<sup>46</sup>

We already mentioned the principle of Parmenides as the basic dogma for practically all Western philosophy. Both objections, in fact, presuppose the principle according to which "to be and to think are isomorphic." "The contradiction cannot be thought, therefore it is not." The contradiction, to be sure, cannot be thought, and from the perspective of thought we must affirm that it is unthinkable. But why should Being obey such a principle?<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> I am sympathetic to Martin Heidegger's statements: "Aber streng genommen können wir nicht sagen: Es gab eine Zeit da der Mensch nicht war. Zu jeder Zeit war und ist und wird der Mensch sein, weil Zeit sich nur zeitigt, sofern der Mensch ist. Es gibt keine Zeit, da der Mensch nicht war, nicht weil der Mensch von Ewigkeit her und in aller Ewigkeit hin ist, sondern weil Zeit nicht Ewigkeit ist und Zeit sich nur je zu einer Zeit als menschlich-geschichtliches Dasein zeitigt" (*Einführung in die Metaphysik* [1953; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966], 64). But we must not necessarily make such an assumption to come to the same conclusion.

<sup>46</sup> It is well-known that the question "Did Nature exist prior to Man?" was hotly debated in the fight (reading the texts one cannot avoid this term) between the "dialectical materialists" and the "philosophy of Mach and Avenarius." See the section under this heading in V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirico-criticism* (1908; New York: International Publishers, 1927), 52–62. The "fallacious and reactionary theory [of Avenarius], for it becomes thereby more cowardly" (53) assumed a "potential" relation between the World (before Man) and Man, and infuriated Lenin as much as any "idealistic" theories based on Fichte or Kant. Here I need only state that my thesis is as distant from the "idealists" as it is from the "materialists." I am not contending that there is or is not an object without a subject, nor am I asserting that there is or is not a "thing in itself." Rather, the argument relies on the constitutive "coordination" (i.e., interrelatedness) of everything, without accepting the metaphysical assumption that ultimately all is matter or all is spirit.

<sup>47</sup> See Panikkar (1990/33).

Now however, as I have said earlier, I should like to present this cosmotheandric principle with the minimum of philosophical assumptions. And the minimum here is that reality shows this triple dimension of an empirical (or physical) element, a noetic (or psychical) factor, and a metaphysical (or spiritual) ingredient. By the first I mean the matter-energy complex, the cosmos; by the second, the *sui generis* reflection of Man on the first and on himself; and by the third, the inherent inexhaustibility of all things: the cosmic, the human, and the divine.

### Description

We have spoken of three different dimensions of reality. The metaphor "dimension" is intended to help overcome the monistic temptation of constructing a simplistic modalistic universe, namely, a universe in which all things are but variations and modes of one substance. At the same time, it represents an attempt to overcome the pluralistic temptation of positing two or more unbridgeable elements, substances or groups of reality that have only external or casual, and ultimately accidental links with one another. Without denying differences, and even recognizing a hierarchical order within the three dimensions, the cosmotheandric intuition stresses the intrinsic relationship among them, so that this threefold current, so to speak, permeates the entire realm of all that is. Elsewhere I have criticized the modern concept of interdependence, which is positive in interaction but not very realistic, as it is still bound to a dualist cosmology. In fact, we speak of *interdependence* in the political and democratic field, and sometimes the Buddhist intuition of *pratityasamutpāda* is similarly interpreted as cosmic interdependence. The cosmotheandric vision is more realistic and more effective in defending the dignity of every being. It does not speak of interdependence, because in that cosmology the smaller depends on the larger and not vice versa; as the Kerala says, when an ant tries to pull an elephant toward it, it is not the elephant that goes toward the ant but the ant that goes toward the elephant. The constitutive relation of the three dimensions of reality is not the interdependence typical of a monist modalism but a relation of *inter-independence*, since it recognizes in every being its own grade of freedom. Every dimension is real and is certainly related to the others, but also maintains its *ontonomy*.<sup>48</sup>

This intuition ultimately results from a mystical experience and as such is ineffable.<sup>49</sup> It is not an analytical conclusion. It is rather a holistic vision that coordinates the various elements of knowledge with the knower, and then transcends them both. In the long run, it is the fruit of a simple and immediate insight that dawns upon Man's awareness once he has glimpsed the core where knower, known, and knowledge meet. I shall have to limit this description to a quick sketch.

For heuristic reasons the three dimensions will be described separately, even though that is quite impossible, since each dimension belongs to the other two, and they cannot be severed. Anyway, it must be clear that we are not dealing with different modes / modalities of one substance, but, like in God's Trinity, each dimension is a pole of the whole reality.

a. In the cosmotheandric vision, the World is not a *habitat* or an external part of myself or even of the whole. The World is simply that greater body that I only imperfectly perceive

<sup>48</sup> See Panikkar (1953/3).

<sup>49</sup> "Mysticism" does not mean esotericism nor ecstatic visions, but the sober experience of reality in its three dimensions, which takes place thanks to the "third eye" together with the eyes of senses and intellect. "Ineffable" does not mean something secret or enigmatic, but something that transcends any linguistic expression, though not denying it.

because I am generally too concerned with my own particular business. My relationship with the World is ultimately no different from my relationship with myself:<sup>50</sup> the World and I differ, but are not two separate realities, for we share each other's life, existence, being, history, and destiny in a unique world.<sup>51</sup> My hand is not my heart; I can live without hands but not without heart. My world does not coalesce with your world; I can live without having realized many of my relations with this World, but not if I lack all of them. In our unique and idiosyncratic ways we share the entire cosmos. We are unique symbols of the complete reality. We are not the entire World but, as the ancients loved to say, we "speculate," we are a reflection, an image of reality.<sup>52</sup> This is what it means to be the image and likeness of the Creator.<sup>53</sup> And this is why everything speaks of "him"<sup>54</sup>—because he speaks everything.<sup>55</sup> There is, certainly, no World nor Man without this third, divine dimension.

Rejecting the World and reducing reality to God and the soul is the typical "spiritualist," or rather gnostic, temptation. Gnosticism can preach salvation in and through knowledge only because it has resigned itself to saving only the soul, the spiritual part of Man and the cosmos.<sup>56</sup> To do so, it must condemn matter and even completely exclude the world of "eternal life": there is no "new Heaven and new Earth"<sup>57</sup>—just the same old sky.

The World is not only the "glory of the Lord"; it is also the World of Man, our own glory. They belong together. Matter is as enduring as spirit, although both may need to pass through the purification of death in order to rise again. Recovering our links with the World is not a question of having, but of Being.<sup>58</sup> The Earth will belong not to the powerful, or the resourceful, or those who are superior to it; but to the meek, the gentle children of Earth.<sup>59</sup>

Something similar could be said regarding God and the World. The cosmos is not just matter and convertible energy. The cosmos has life, the cosmos is on the move and, like

<sup>50</sup> See the universalization of the *gāyatri* (the most holy verse in the *Rg-veda*) in the classic Indic process of attaining the right conscience: "*yā vai sā prthivi-iyam vāva sād idam asmin purure śariram*" [What the earth is, that is the body of Man too] (CU III.1.2.3).

<sup>51</sup> See the words of Thomas Traherne: "You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars; and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more then so, because Men are in it who are every one sole heir as well as you" (*Centuries*, quoted in T. Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, op. cit., 133).

<sup>52</sup> See the symbolism of the mirror that no longer reflects one's own image in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*. This surely is death.

<sup>53</sup> See Gen 1:26–27.

<sup>54</sup> See Rom 1:20 and the innumerable commentaries thereon throughout the Christian tradition. The World is the first Revelation of God. For an idea of the traditional understanding of Nature, see M. D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1966), the many volumes of Étienne Gilson, and the four volumes of H. De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* (Paris: Aubier, 1959).

<sup>55</sup> See Thomas Aquinas: "Deus enim cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. . . . Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum eius est espressivum non solum Patris, sed etiam creaturam" (*Sum. theol.* I, q.34, a.3, c. See also Ps 39:3 ff.).

<sup>56</sup> "The essential core [of the gnostic system] is the enterprise of returning the *pneuma* in Man from its state of alienation in the cosmos to the divine *pneuma* of the Beyond through action based on knowledge" (E. Voegelin, op. cit., 20).

<sup>57</sup> See Rev 21:1 ff.

<sup>58</sup> See Jose Ortega y Gasset's famous axiom: "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia," which would be interpreted not only as an immediate Umwelt, but as the total environment of Man that belongs to his very Being—and vice versa.

<sup>59</sup> See Mt 5:4 concerning the meaning of prayers (gentle, humble, considerate, meek) and of *ambaretz* (the forlorn).

Man, has also a dimension of plus, a "more," that is in itself and yet does not come from a restricted, abstract "itself." The cosmos is not an isolated chunk of matter and energy; it is the third dimension of the total reality.<sup>60</sup> A cosmos without Man and consciousness would not be and is not, certainly, the cosmos we inhabit. A cosmos without this divine urge, this dynamism built into its innermost core, is surely not the cosmos we experience, the proper garb of every actual theophany.

b. God is not the absolute Other (regardless of the philosophical difficulty inherent in this formulation: absolute transcendence is contradicted by the very thought of it). Nor is God the same as us. I would say that God is the ultimate and unique "I,"<sup>61</sup> that we are God's "you," and that our relation is personal, trinitarian, and nondualistic. But the cosmotheandric vision does not need to be couched in such terms. It is enough to say that Man experiences, in the depth of his own being, the inexhaustible possibilities of and for relationship, his non-finite (i.e., infinite) character—for he is not a closed being and cannot put limits on his own growth and evolution. Man discovers and senses an inbuilt *more* in his own being that at once belongs to and transcends his own being. He discovers another dimension that he cannot manipulate. There is always more than meets the eye, finds the mind, or touches the heart. This *ever more*—ever more than what we perceive, understand, and love—stands for the divine dimension.

Traditionally, this *more* has also been experienced as a *better* and most of the time as an *other*, as the mystery of the Beginning and the Beyond, that is, as the Eternal and Infinite (or the Super-Temporal and Super-Spatial). Here is not the place to set up a model for the divine. The cosmotheandric myth, as I am tempted to call it, clearly excludes a rigid monism or an unqualified atomism, as much as it excludes deism and anthropomorphism, but it does not exclude the wide range of systems that try more or less successfully to encompass the rich variety of the given without sacrificing that variety for the sake of unity, or oneness for the sake of multiplicity.

God is not only the God of Man, but also the God of the World. A God with no cosmological functions would not be God at all, but a mere phantom. God is that dimension of more and better for the World as much as for Man. Not only Man, but also the cosmos is unachieved, not finished, in-finite. The cosmos does not expand mechanically or unfold automatically; it also evolves, grows, moves toward an ever new universe. Not only are theology and meta-physics (disciplines that claim to be all-embracing) necessary; but now, more than ever, also theo-physics has its place.<sup>62</sup>

In order to express linguistically what we are trying to say, Latin is helpful: God is certainly not the Other (*alius*), unrelated to Man and completely separate, but neither is he the *idem*. God is the *alter*, the other "part" of us and of the world. As an *alter* we cannot confuse him, but equally as an *alter* we cannot identify him with us. It is clear, therefore, that the *more* that we have mentioned is not an additive factor or something external and extraneous that does not belong to real Man; it is an *ens a se*, as the Western tradition would put it.

<sup>60</sup> "Omnis mundi creatura quasi liber et pictura nobis est et speculum" [Every creature of the world is for us book, picture and mirror], says the always astonishing Alanus de Insulis (PL 210.599a), expressing the common belief of many centuries.

<sup>61</sup> See F. Nietzsche's saying "If there is a God I would not suffer not to be God," and Simone Weil's affirmation "Qui dit je, ment," or the *upaniṣadic* experience *aham-brahman* (I [am] Brahman).

<sup>62</sup> See the epilogue to my *Ontonomía de la ciencia*, op. cit., 355–59.

c. *Man* is this *ens ab alio*, without which the *ens a se* has no meaning, since in that case every entity would be *a se*. This *ab alio* has to be understood inversely: an *ab alio* requires an *a se* from which the *ab alio* originates. In other words the *ab alio* must rely on the *a se*, not as one body lies on another but rather as the intrinsic foundation of the contingent being (*ab alio*). God is immanent to Man, otherwise there would be no con-tingence (*cum tangere*)—that is, the “substantial touch” with Divinity, to use the parlance of St. John of the Cross. The Scholastic expression, coined as a result of the fall of Trinity (for fear of pantheism), did not use the phrase most appropriate to Man (and to any creature) as a being *in alio*.

Man is ultimately more than an individual. Man is a person, a knot in the net of relationships not limited to the spiritual “you,” but reaching out to the very antipodes of the real. An isolated individual is not only incomprehensible and unable to survive, he would also be contradictory. Man is only Man with the sky above, the earth below, and his fellow Beings all around. But just as “individualizing” the Human being is tantamount to cutting the umbilical cord that gives him life, so isolating Man from God and the World equally strangulates him. There is no Man without God or without World.<sup>63</sup>

We have already spoken of Man as the bearer of awareness. This awareness is not our private property and we are not its masters, but it constitutes us as Men. That is our privilege. Man is not the center of the universe because the universe has no center, but it is through this awareness that we realize the fact. Anthropocentrism is false, and Man realizes this, but what our consciousness cannot do is to leapfrog itself and still be able to speak about it, just as we cannot catch our own shadow. Anthropocentrism can be overcome, but anthropomorphism is our shadow. Even the boldest metaphor of our human condition will only bring us to another shore that is still washed by the waters of our humanity.

We often see the metaphor of water for the fish and air for the bird used to describe human consciousness: we are inside and cannot get out, since any kind of leap beyond consciousness still occurs within consciousness, as we are speaking about it and therefore we are conscious of it.

But the metaphor of the fish is the richer one. Certainly a fish cannot live out of water, but just as some fish have the ability to perform jumps into the air, so Man can make a leap toward transcendence beyond his consciousness. It is, however, only a leap, a *raptus*, or an ecstasy: an experience that allows us to see that we are not the whole universe or its center. These leaps enable human consciousness to glimpse transcendence.

And that is not all: if the fish stays too long out of the water it dies, just as Man dies if he does not return to the waters of awareness. But here is the mystery of Man: the fish will cease to exist, but Man can come back before his physiological death, and this allows him to speak of his divine, immanent, and transcendent dimension.

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Perhaps we run into a semantic problem here. Perhaps these three names or groups of names should be reserved for the exclusivistic features of their respective dimensions. If so, the divine would stand for what is neither human nor cosmic, the human for what is neither

<sup>63</sup> See the astounding cosmotheandric saying of Tsze-sze: “He who can totally sweep clean the chalice of himself can carry the inborn nature of others to its fulfillment; getting to the bottom of the natures of men, one can thence understand the nature of material things, and this understanding of the nature of things can aid the transforming and nutritive powers of earth and heaven [ameliorate the quality of the grain, for example] and raise Man up to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth” (Chung Yung XXII [E. Pound translation]).

divine nor cosmic, and the cosmic for what is neither human nor divine. But how then do we link the three together? How do we explain the extra- or super-human urges of Man? Or the creative power of the cosmos? Or the humanizing bent of the divine? To be sure, it is all only a way of speaking, but just as surely do modern Man's idioms require a thoroughgoing revision, indeed, a new language. Man does not become less human when he discovers his divine calling, nor does God lose His divinity when He is humanized, nor the World become less worldly when it bursts into life and consciousness. Perhaps we are saying that Man is at the crossroads, because the real is precisely this crossing of these three dimensions. Every real existence is a unique knot in this trefoil net. The cosmotheandric vision of reality comes from a holistic and integral insight into the nature of all that there is.

An old mandala could perhaps help to symbolize the cosmotheandric intuition: the circle. There is no circle without a center and a circumference. The three are not the same and yet not separable. The circumference is not the center, but without the latter the former would not be. The circle, itself invisible, is neither the circumference nor the center, yet it is circumscribed by the one and implies the other. The center does not depend on the others, since it is dimensionless, yet it would not be the center (or anything at all, for that matter) without the other two. The circle, only visible from the circumference, is matter, energy, the world. And this is so because the circumference, Man, consciousness encompass it. And both are what they are because there is God, a center, which alone—that is, *qua* God, as the ancients would put it—is a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.<sup>64</sup>

How shall we call the complete mandala? We should distinguish the divine, the human, and the cosmic; the center should not be confused with the circumference, and this latter should not be mixed up with the circle, but we cannot allow separation. After all, the circumference is the center "grown up," the circle is the circumference "filled in," and the center acts as the very "seed" of the other two. There is a "circuminsession," a *perichôresis* of the three.<sup>65</sup>

In the ecumenic age, the cosmos acted mainly as the center; because this attitude was ecstatic, it could be cosmocentric, for Man was not totally aware of himself and his special position in the universe. Thinking was mainly a passive activity—precisely because Man, who thought it, was passive. But when we become aware that the World was not the center, we also began to look for the real center and circumference. This marks the transitional phase of theocentric conceptions, which ends when Man finally realizes that it is he who has enthroned God in and as the center.

<sup>64</sup> The phrase apparently first occurs in the twelfth century pseudo-Hermetic *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* (prop. 2): "Deus est sphaera infinita, cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia nusquam." This is the source for Eckhart and, after him, Nicolaus of Cusa. See the interesting "variation" given by Alain of Lille (*Regulae theologicae*): "Deus est sphaera intelligibilis, cuius centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam." For a further consideration of the metaphor itself, which later is applied to the universe in Pascal, etc., see K. Harries, "The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (January 1975): 5–15.

<sup>65</sup> See Job 10:30, 38; 14:9ff., 17:21; 1 Cor 1:9ff., as well as the words of Augustine: "So both each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all in one" (*De Trinitate* VI.10.12 [PL 42.932]), or again: "But in these three, when the mind knows itself and loves itself, there remains a trinity: mind, love, knowledge; and this trinity is not confounded together by any commingling: although they are each severally in themselves and mutually all in all, or each severally in each two, or each two in each. Therefore all are in all" (*De Trin.* IX.5 [PL 42.965]). Translation from *Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by P. S. Shaff, vol. 3, *St. Augustine on the Holy Trinity* (New York, 1917).

In the economic phase, Man becomes more and more the center; because this moment was enstatic, it was bound to become anthropocentric, for Man was conscious of Being the measure of all things and thus of his central position in the universe. Thinking became active, precisely because Man became conscious of his mental activity. But as we gain perspective on the various arcs of the circumference, we discover that it is not a straight line and we begin to look for a possible center—or centers—of the curvature. No wonder that this problematic center was sought in a multitude of ways and not easily found, for one segment of the circumference yields a different center from that calculated from any other sector of the circumference. Apparently we are not all on the same circumference, until we go far enough . . . and share the same mythical horizon.

The cosmotheandric vision does not gravitate around a single point, neither God nor Man nor World, and in this sense it has no center. The three coexist, they interrelate and may be hierarchically constituted or coordinated—the way ontological priorities must be—but they cannot be isolated, for this would annihilate them.

This cosmotheandric intuition I have been trying to describe, though expressed rather philosophically, represents, I think, the emerging religious consciousness of our times. Modern Man has killed an isolated and insular God, contemporary Earth is killing a merciless and rapacious Man, and God seems to have deserted both Man and cosmos. But having touched bottom, we perceive signs of resurrection. At the root of the ecosophical sensibility there is a mystical strain; at the bottom of Man's self-understanding is a need for the infinite and un-understandable; and at the very heart of the divine is an urge for time, space, and Man.

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*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum: et hoc quod continet omnia scientiam habet vocis. Alleluia.*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See Ws 1:7: "The spirit of the Lord, indeed, fills the whole world, and that which holds all things together knows every word that is said" (Jerusalem Bible).

## **Part Two**

### **ASPECTS OF A COSMOTHEANDRIC SPIRITUALITY**





## INTRODUCTION

*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum.*

*Wis 1:7*

Up to this point we have tried to explain how humanity today is living through a moment that calls for a radical change in human consciousness. The novelty of technoscience, which has modified the very fabric of the planet, must progress hand in hand with the spiritual growth of Man.

The word "spirituality," which we continue to use, suggests a primacy of the spirit. Spirit is the symbol of the noblest part of Reality, as affirmed by Laozi, Meister Eckhart, and many others. However, a dialectical interpretation of "spirituality" would seem to place spirit and matter in contraposition to each other, which is exactly the opposite of what we want to say. In the cosmotheandric vision there is no matter without spirit and vice versa, nor is there spirit without soul, although this is not a dialectic relation.<sup>2</sup> The word "spirituality" was introduced into contemporary language as a substitute for the word "religion" because of the sense that the latter had taken on over recent decades, especially in the Romance languages. "Religion" has become a synonym for organized religion—a social institution, generally with a dogmatic ideological structure—and has lost its original meaning of "religiosity" as a human dimension and its etymological sense as "what binds," or rather "rebinds," the spirit with the soul and the body, both in the individual and in society. That "force," "energy," and "drive" that bind and "rebind" Men with one another and also with the earth and the whole universe—that "yearning," "aspiration," and "attraction" that drives us to reestablish a bond with the Mystery, the Infinite, the Invisible, the Abyss, the Void, or God—these have been lost. According to its etymology "religion" can also be interpreted not just as what in actual fact binds us passively (*religat*) but also as what we live actively when we choose it as a free relation (*relegere*).<sup>3</sup> I would like to revive the holistic and traditional sense of religion as *tao*, *dharma*, and the like, but I have refrained from using these definitions in order to avoid the greater danger of giving the impression that this is a new "religion" in contraposition to the institutionalized religions as "belief systems." We therefore use the word "spirituality" while emphasizing the fact that the spirit is a driver of activity.<sup>4</sup> In other words, practice is just as important as theory, since they cannot be separated: practice without theory is blind: it does not see reality and therefore yields no positive results, whereas theory without practice

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<sup>1</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole Earth." The LXX Bible speaks of the *pneuma* of the Lord filling the *oikoumene*, the world and all its inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> See Klages (1929–1932). The title of his work is significant: "The Spirit as the Enemy (the Contrary, the Adversary) of the Soul."

<sup>3</sup> A third etymology is also possible; see Panikkar (1964/ix, 54) [*re-legere, re-ligare, re-eligere*].

<sup>4</sup> This is one of the functions African religions attribute to the spirit, as does Christian liturgy: "to renew the face of the earth," the divine energy at work in everything.

is maimed: it has no hands with which to touch reality, does not influence reality, and is all too often counterproductive. A cosmotheandric spirituality, therefore, means a life in which theory and practice form a harmonic whole. In this spirituality, theory is not the cause of practice, or practice the cause of theory; although they do influence each other, neither of the two prevails over the other, thus overcoming the dialectical antinomy of the *aut aut*.

It would be beyond the scope of our study to attempt to describe this spirituality, which does not claim to replace traditional spiritualities but only to complete them, at times correcting them or trying to revive neglected aspects.

The nine chapters that follow do not develop the better-known aspects of all spiritualities like meditation, asceticism, the mastery of the passions, awareness, abandon, pureness of heart, truthfulness and humility, or indeed love and the many other virtues—indispensable as they are. Our study, as we have already said, does not aim to be a treatise on spirituality but only to underline some often-neglected aspects.

A certain predominantly contemporary mentality may wonder how to classify this spirituality: Christian, Buddhist, atheist, pantheist, or other. I have often criticized the mania for classification: in order to understand a phenomenon the analytical mentality feels the need to isolate it, to distinguish it from others and look for the "specific difference," and so it classifies phenomena according to their differences of class. But for other mentalities it is not necessary to isolate a phenomenon in order to understand it.<sup>5</sup> How to classify cosmotheandric spirituality is a legitimate question but one that is not necessary for its comprehension. We do, however, need to use a particular language, even though we know that all language is the product of a specific culture and intelligible only in its own context. Our language is certainly Western and therefore full of Latin, Hellenic, Semitic, and Anglo-Saxon resonances, even when it ventures into other cultures. When we say *heart*, for example, the Western reader will not understand *shin* (*kokoro*), or *hrdaya*, or *nefesh*, or *haqq*. *Dharma* is not identical to *dhamma*, or to *duty* or *religion*, just as *God* is not precisely *Zeus* or *brahman* or *kami*, and yet despite this there exists a relationship of homeomorphic equivalence among these names.

Cosmotheandric spirituality, despite its particular language, is not a "confessional" or "syncretistic" spirituality but it can be considered the foundation of all incarnate human spirituality—in "transcendental relation" with every spirituality.

The titles of these nine chapters are like *sūtras* because their content is related like pearls on a necklace and attempts to encapsulate a complete vision of life that needs to be meditated and, above all, lived. It would be a misunderstanding to interpret these pearls as isolated and without a chain linking them together as a necklace. We shall not describe the necklace, but we cannot hide the name of the chain. The name is *Love*. Without love the pearls have no value, and conversely without the *sūtras* the necklace would not be a necklace. Love is not an abstraction; real love is always incarnate, and these *sūtras* are merely crystallizations that shine when love illuminates them and links them together. The *sūtras* are not pieces of practical advice to be followed or abstract principles to be accepted; they are theoretical-practical affirmations to be incarnated.

<sup>5</sup> See Panikkar (1970/xi, 37–41).

## THE PRIMACY OF LIFE

"I have come so that they may have Life and have it to the full"<sup>1</sup> could be a suitable headline for this first aspect of spirituality. It is the Life that was in him,<sup>2</sup> the First-born of the universe,<sup>3</sup> although he was not the Origin, the Father of lights,<sup>4</sup> of that light that enlightens every man who comes into this world and gives him Life.<sup>5</sup> Immortal Life is "what the Gods worship as the Light of lights."<sup>6</sup> But light is invisible; it only becomes visible when it falls on an opaque body that receives, absorbs, and reflects the light. Only when it reaches us is it transformed into light. Light on its own is not light—as indeed any entity on its own is not an entity. Every being is relation. This "light that shines above . . . all worlds . . . is the same light that shines in Man," says another sacred text.<sup>7</sup> The experience of light is the gateway to the supreme experience: the experience of Life. Life is within and without, it is us and it is above us. This is the fundamental cosmotheandric experience: the experience of Life. Life is not the private property even of those beings that we call sentient or animate. When the Copernican cosmology replaced that of Ptolemy and the cosmology of modern science eliminated those of other human traditions, there was a step forward in the "scientific" knowledge of the universe, but at the cost of a reductionism that has made life an epiphenomenon of the cosmos. It is not a matter of going back to so-called magical animism but of recovering a more complete cosmovision.

Life pervades all reality. We are not here adopting an undifferentiated panpsychism, but rather overcoming a static conception of Being without slipping into a merely dynamicist vision of reality. The experience of Life does not fall into these kinds of extremism because it does not break the *harmony* of reality.

Harmony, as I have explained elsewhere, is the category proper to *advaita* and to Trinity, because the relation on which both are based can only be balanced and therefore harmonious. Ultimately a monist vision of reality tends toward *One*, a dualist vision toward *Union* (of two), and an a-dualist vision toward *Harmony*.

Life is constant novelty and at the same time continuity in transformation. When the continuity sustaining the life of a being is interrupted, it results in the death of that being, but not of Life. Life does not die, say the *Vedas*,<sup>8</sup> only the individual dies.

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<sup>1</sup> Jn 10:10.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 1:4.

<sup>3</sup> Col 1:15. See *AT* XIX.6.4.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 1:8; Jas 1:17; etc.

<sup>5</sup> Jn 1:9.

<sup>6</sup> *BU* IV.4.16.

<sup>7</sup> *CU* III.13.7.

<sup>8</sup> *CU* VI.11.3.

Reality is alive—or rather, it is Life. What we have called the three dimensions of reality are three forms of Life.

Divinity is Life. God is the Living one by antonomasia.

Man is a living being. The experience of Life is the fundamental human experience, open to all men. Life is "anterior" to action and thought, and is inseparable from Being.

Matter is also alive. We shall linger a bit over this statement, since the other two are less problematic: "The Earth is alive. She is the Mother." "The intercourse between Heaven and Earth bears all creatures": it gives them life, and sustains that life. "Innumerable spirits and powers dwell within the World." "This World overflows with Gods." "This entire universe is the creation, that is, the offspring of a divine Life that extends its own vitality to the entire cosmos." "Life is not the privilege of Man alone, but Man shares in the Life of the universe."

Man, precisely because he is alive, has been called the microcosm; and, just as the microcosm lives, so does the macrocosm, which is a living Being, having a principle of unity, a living principle, a soul. The *natura naturans* (the begetting nature) is the very life of the *natura naturata* (the begotten nature). The three worlds—Heaven, Earth, Man—all share in one and the same life. What begins at the subatomic level, the assimilation of one thing by another in order to survive at a "superior" level, culminates in the drinking of the *soma* and the eating of the Eucharist. An Upanishad says, "I am food. I, who am food, eat the eater of food."<sup>9</sup> It is all subsumed in that primordial dynamism we call sacrifice: our partaking in the universal metabolism that lets Life be(come) alive, and by which the entire reality subsists.

These and similar ideas have been ubiquitous companions of humankind since the dawning of human consciousness, and have hardly disappeared from the contemporary scene. They keep on living by almost two-thirds of the world's peoples, and even in the supposedly "developed" third we see about us plenty of instances and revivals of these traditional insights. "Deep" ecology, ecosophy, psychological renewals, the "Gaia hypothesis," the resurgence of interest in shamanic practices, Godless spiritualities, the revalorization of so-called polytheism, the birth of "new" religions, the recent respect for Native peoples, as well as the many attempts to critically overcome the inadequacies of scientism by grafting new cosmological insights onto the natural sciences—all these are signs, though very different as to their value, of a change that is taking place. Their common center of gravity, despite the diverse forms and varying merits of such movements, lies in a marked dissatisfaction with the technocratic atmosphere predominant in Western life since the swansong of Romanticism. Yet the danger of all popular movements remains, namely that they may readily give way to superficial clichés, extreme attitudes, and one-sided reactions.

In the classic world, the debate was about the issue of the so-called *anima mundi*.<sup>10</sup> That the Earth has a soul means that she is alive, that is, that she has in herself the immediate cause of her own movements. This is a good beginning, provided we do not segregate the cause from the effect. It is not by causal thinking that we become aware of Life. The soul is not the "cause" that makes the Earth alive. The expression "to have a soul" is misleading, because it leads precisely to the dichotomy we intend to overcome. The Earth is not an inert body enlivened by some engine, animated by a soul. The Earth is alive because Being is Life.

The myth of the *anima mundi* suggests simply that the Earth is a living organism, that she has a spontaneity that does not just mechanically follow a pattern or patterns set once and for all. It denotes a certain freedom, which is no mere caprice or unbridled whimsicality, but which entails both a measure of predictability as well as, seen from "outside," as it were,

<sup>9</sup> TU III.10.6.

<sup>10</sup> See, among others, Schlette (1993), for a historical-philosophical reflection on the issue.

an interval of indeterminacy. The very expression "anima mundi" does not say that the Earth has an *anima* (soul), but that it *is* an animal, that is, is *animate* in the original sense. The very shift of meaning in the word "animal" betrays the victorious influence of the Cartesian outlook, which systematically deprives animals of their animus and thus of their very Being as animate things.<sup>11</sup>

European rationalism in the late nineteenth century considered so-called animism to be a "primitive" vision of the realities of "underdeveloped" cosmologies, and by this interpretation it did nothing but provide evidence of its own prejudices and limitations. Undoubtedly the life (*anima*) of an animal is not the same as the life of a vegetable. But even stones have an *anima*, a life of their own, though it is what we call energy. The expression "anima mundi" can be misleading since it may lead us to suppose that there is a world without a soul; but in that case it would not be a world, just as a man without a soul is not a man but a corpse. The world is world because it is alive.<sup>12</sup> Poets seem to grasp this idea, but rational minds smile at them as though they were expressing metaphors suggestive of an unreal world, as in the case of Rainer Maria Rilke, who has stones speaking in dialogue with Michelangelo.<sup>13</sup>

Reviving an animist spirituality does not mean returning to an anti-scientific and "primitive" conception of matter; rather, it represents a step forward in the experience of matter. The Earth has to be viewed as a subject and not only an object. The consequences reach into economics, politics, and indeed religion.

All of this has led me to introduce the term *ecosophy*.<sup>14</sup> By "ecosophy" I mean the "wisdom of the earth" in the subjective genitive sense, although it is Man who is the (human) interpreter of this wisdom.<sup>15</sup> Current debate on animal rights and the rights of the Earth shows that the ecosophic mentality is spreading, albeit slowly, in certain areas. I say slowly because our approach to this issue is still monocultural, and indeed imbued with a Roman conception of rights. We would have a different perspective if, instead of discussing "rights" (the Roman *ius*) we talked about *dharma*, *karma*, or *ṛta*. The earth has its own intrinsic and natural order: violating it is not so much a question of abusing its "rights" but of injuring its nature.

The cosmotheandric vision makes us aware of the fact that to injure the *anima mundi* is to create a disharmony in the whole of reality—to damage the life of the world.

Secular spirituality is aware of the fact that the *saeculum* is alive, with all the consequences that follow. This does not change the fact that human life as *zōē* goes far beyond biological life as *bios*.

The *anima mundi* is certainly not the Holy Spirit—a belief condemned by the church as pantheistic but not as a (universal) belief in the *anima mundi* itself.<sup>16</sup> Until recent times, and even in the West, there was no real doubt regarding the soul of the earth. The crisis started with Pasteur (1822–1895) when he demonstrated that "spontaneous generation" of animals does not exist. It is clear that *anima mundi* is not meant to signify the animal soul, but rather the life that pervades the world. The earth, the solar system, indeed the whole universe is a self-moving and self-regulating system, and it also acts differently according to

<sup>11</sup> *Anima* also means "air," "breath," and "spirit." See the Greek *anemos*, "wind," and the Sanskrit *aniti* "he breathes," as well as *ātman* (breath, soul, life, self) and *ṇ prāṇa* (the breath of life).

<sup>12</sup> The sentence attributed to Buddha at his awakening in Bodhgāya is, "The living beings, the non-living beings, become paths at the same time."

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Rilke (1987), 4:345–50.

<sup>14</sup> A term that had already been used by Arne Naess, but in a different sense. See, however, Skolimowski (1992), whose idea of an "ecophilosophy" is close to the meaning I give to "ecosophy."

<sup>15</sup> See Panikkar (1993/xxxiv).

<sup>16</sup> See Denzinger (1967 §722).

various levels of freedom. A stone reacts to pressure and heat, an animal to other stimuli, and Man to others again.<sup>17</sup> The dominant cosmological system does not provide us with a term to define the "sensitivity" of things that it calls "not living" (that is, dead). However, no entity is isolated and without relations with the environment around it, even though the "senses" of things are different from the senses of plants, as the latter are different from the "senses" of animals, and so forth.

At this point we should clarify a very widespread misunderstanding. The conception of the world as a great mechanism, reinforced by the Cartesian dualism between body and soul, has caused so-called spiritualists to defend the vision of a (spiritual) mover extrinsic to the world, commonly known as God. The fear of pantheism, especially in monotheistic cultures, led to bodies, as such, being considered to be systems sustained by the principle of *inertia*—that is, as lifeless beings. Although "living" bodies have a greater degree of freedom, they too are subject to the principle of *entropy*.

Without doubt, human life is not at the same level as animal life, which in turn is not at the level of material life, just as the life of the angels, in which so many traditions believe, is not equal to divine life. But Life itself co-penetrates the whole universe.

The anima mundi of the cosmotheandric vision is not the mover that starts things up from the outside with an initial "chiquenaude," as Descartes put it. In the lovely metaphor of Aristotle, if the prime mover moves the world like the love of a lover (*hos eromenos*), the universe cannot fail to feel this *attraction*. The anthropomorphism of this formulation of the law of gravity (the bodies are *attracted* . . .) is more important than it seems.

*Vita viventibus est esse* (life for the living is being), says the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition. Just as there are many forms or levels of being, so there are many forms or levels of life. These levels should not be confused, but the cosmotheandric vision can find no symbol other than Life to express this dynamism that informs and penetrates the whole universe. Man recognizes this life by becoming conscious of living. The life of Man is conscious life: it is the *bios theoretikos* of Greek civilization and intellectual life in the broadest sense of the term. Thus, true culture does not consist of acquiring lots of information but in knowing how to live consciously—that is, in being conscious of Life. This is "gaudium vitae"—joie de vivre.

In summary, cosmotheandric spirituality does not deny "the Glory of God" or "the kingdom of Justice in the world," *nirvāṇa*, Heaven, Happiness, or Perfection, but places the emphasis on the *experience of Life*, an experience that in turn leads to the realization of these great ideals we have mentioned. This experience is *universal* in Man. Every man is conscious of living and tends to configure his life according to an axiology, at times received and at others discovered but always accepted. The experience of Life is offered to everyone, and each one of us can live it in its fullness.

But what is this Life?

<sup>17</sup> See T. Berry (1988) for a similar idea, as well as Panikkar (1961/v, 179ff.), as to the issue of life as self-movement, and the possibility of "life in vitro" long before the current debate related to genes and cloning.

## LIFE AS THE TIME OF BEING

It is an encouraging paradox, that the contemporary secular mentality is again sensitive to a dimension of the *anima mundi* that remained somewhat neglected over the last few centuries of Western culture. The paradox is that modernity has become responsive to a most traditional characterization of life: time—and time is the great challenge of modernity. The word *anima* simply means life, and life is the supreme category. "Eternity is Life [ζωή, *zōē*], which persists in itself, and to which the Whole is ever present."<sup>1</sup> Man is life, and the very material world belongs to life.

Besides and beyond sociological and historical contingencies, the deepest aspect of secularity is the, not only positive, but definitive importance it gives to Time. Secularity asserts the nonprovisional value of the *saeculum*, that is, the temporal world—as it has already and extensively been said. The *saeculum* is a real universe, not an illusory or secondary one. The real World is temporal, and temporality its ultimate character.

From Aristotle onward,<sup>2</sup> modified by the Middle Ages,<sup>3</sup> and accepted by the Renaissance,<sup>4</sup> the specificity of Life was self-movement. Only living Beings are "auto-mobiles." Stones, from a macroscopic standpoint at least, do not move. But movement was considered mainly in spatial terms, with little emphasis on the temporal.<sup>5</sup> Our secular mentality is ready to reconnect Time and Life.

That the World is temporal means, consequently, that it is not a dead structure, a mere skeleton impervious to the passing of Time. The ancient Greeks, as we may see in the *Lexicon* of Hesychius of Alexandria, fifth century CE, had already defined life (*zōē*) as *chronos tou einai* (time of Being). The very temporality of the universe shows us that it is alive; it has youth, maturity and old age, infirmities, and maybe even death.

We might pause here a moment in order to restore an important connection that is often overlooked. Being has often been understood as the underlying and thus immovable ground beneath all that there is. Being is allegedly immutable, perennial, unchangeable, eternal, and ultimately divine. Things change because they are not yet what they can be or "want" to be. They want to be precisely because they are not, since they have not attained the fullness of Being—which in turn is already full, and therefore immutable. They want to be, and to the same extent they lack Being. Now, Time is the "flow" of beings, but beings can flow only

<sup>1</sup> See Plotinus, *Enn.* III.7.3 (17).

<sup>2</sup> See R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: CSIC, 1971), 200ff. for a more detailed study of the nature of this self-movement.

<sup>3</sup> See inter alia, Thomas Aquinas, *Sum theol.* I, q.18, a.1.

<sup>4</sup> In this context it is interesting to note the revolutionary consequences of Galileo's theories, which implied that the living celestial bodies must follow the same laws as inanimate terrestrial things.

<sup>5</sup> See Panikkar (1961/v), where I briefly expound my critic to "pan-psychism."



into Being. Time "becomes" the very flow of Being. This is what the Greeks called *zōē*, Life. This Life is the very life of Being, its own Time.

Present-day consciousness has stressed the intrinsic relation between Being and Time.<sup>6</sup> Time is not an accident to Being; Being itself is temporal. Beings do not ride on something called Time as if sledding down a snowy slope. Temporality belongs to the very essence of beings, and the concrete "time" of a being cannot be abstracted from it without destroying that being. A twentieth-century Aśoka or a medieval jet airplane are contradictions in terms. Not only are there no such things, but there cannot be such things, because Aśoka would not be Aśoka, nor the airplane an airplane, in extraneous times. This is a further example of an extrapolation of scientific thought outside its proper field. True thinking is not an algebra on concepts.

The human experience of time offers us a good example of the spiriform evolution of human consciousness: we thus come back to Time as Life. The word *time* originally connoted a predominantly qualitative intuition, in the sense that each Being had its own time. Time was a peculiarity of each existing thing. With the discovery of an underlying quantitative pattern to any duration, Time became identified with its quantitative parameter, under the assumption that there was a univocal correspondence of "measured time" to the richer reality of time. "Physical time" was degraded to a mere field (place) where material phenomena display their potentialities in an entirely mechanistic and determined way: a fourth dimension that can be expressed through Cartesian coordinates—a function of space and speed.

In any case, contemporary Western consciousness (modern science included) regains the insight that time belongs to the very reality of each Being. Temporality is a peculiar form of human existence and, as such, not just a freeway along which Man drives, but part and parcel of his own being. The past is not left behind, but accumulated in the present (time); the future is not just to come, but to some extent also effective in the present, and so on. This all demonstrates a direct relationship with a cosmotheandric spirituality that frees us from the weight of the past and from the anxiety of the future, but without abolishing time. This is precisely the intrinsic bond that binds our whole being in a more or less harmonious unity, as the negative *karma* of the past has been forgiven (cancelled) or redeemed and the unknowns of the future more or less integrated into our freedom. And this occurs at two levels: at the individual level it touches the nucleus of our being, and at the personal level it relates us to the rest of the universe. Cosmotheandric spirituality is, in fact, that form of life that connects us to the destiny of all reality, not in a mechanistic way but with the personal spaces of freedom: it is the inter-in-dependence of all reality that we have already mentioned several times.

What our present-day consciousness begins to rediscover is the intrinsic connection between Life and Being at the deepest level. Life is the very dynamism of Being. Things move, and their movement is temporal. Once a thing dies, time ceases to move, to be, for that thing. Things are inasmuch as they move; and they move in so far as they are temporal (they "move in time," improperly speaking), that is, in so far as they are alive. This, however, should not be taken to blur the distinction between so-called inanimate bodies and so-called living Beings.<sup>7</sup>

Life is the very Time intrinsic to things, as the Greeks already saw. Now, this general, universal Life (*ζωή* [*zōē*]), should be distinguished from *bios*, this latter understood as the

<sup>6</sup> See *Being and Time*, one of the first books by Heidegger (1972), which earned him a place among the greatest philosophers, at least of our time.

<sup>7</sup> See my distinction between immanent and intrinsic movement in *Ontonomía de la Ciencia* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 121ff., and *El concepto de naturaleza*, op. cit., 166.

individual life—exactly contrary to current usage in modern science, but in accord with its use in “biography.” *Zōē* stands for “the life of the creatures.”<sup>8</sup> This connection is so intrinsic that the two terms can be inverted, as Plotinus did. This life is precisely time, the time of Being, or “time of the soul.”

Time, then, is contained in differentiation of life; the ceaseless forward movement of life brings with it unending Time; and life, as it achieves its stages, constitutes past time. It would be sound, then, to define time (*χρόνος*) as the *life of the soul* in movement (*ζωή ψυχῆς ἐν κινήσει*) as it passes from one stage of experience to another. For eternity is life in repose (*ζωή ἐν στασει*), unchanging, self-identical, always endless complete; and if there is to be an image of Eternity [it is] Time.<sup>9</sup>

This last sentence is the famous definition given by Plato, and repeated by plenty of authors from then on. “Eternal life” does not mean atemporal *bios*, but rather *zōē*, unlimited life, which is precisely full of temporality—*aionios zōē* as the Gospels call it—cosmic life, secular life, life of the centuries (*saeculi*).<sup>10</sup>

If Greece conceives of Life as the time of Being, classical India perceives time as the life-breath of reality. It is time that “matures Beings, and encompasses things.” Time is the “Lord who works change in beings.” “Time created the Earth.” “In time is consciousness.” And, in an explicit way, “In time is life” (*prāṇa*).<sup>11</sup>

To express the notion of Life, the Sanskrit tradition mostly uses words with *prā*, to breathe in, and hence to live. *Prāṇa* connotes breath, spirit, vitality.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes it is the plural, which means Life, in the sense of the collection of all life-breaths. Life is that which fills and fulfills all that there is.<sup>13</sup> Other words are *asu*, which means vital strength and also breath, and similarly, *āyus*, vital power and also life span, lifetime.<sup>14</sup>

This experience of time is essential for a cosmotheandric spirituality: Man is time inasmuch as he is life, but he is not the owner of “his” time, just as he is not the master of his own life. Man lives “in” life and partakes in life—and life, as the *Vedas* say, does not die, which would be a contradiction; as another text puts it, “Inside death there is life.”<sup>15</sup> Those who have the experience of Life are not afraid of death. Only the individual dies. Cosmotheandric

<sup>8</sup> As to this fundamental distinction, see K. Kerényi, *Dionysos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), xxxii. Kerényi also cites Hesychios [*sic*] and Plotinos [*sic*].

<sup>9</sup> S. MacKenna’s translation, as revised by G. H. Turnbull in *The Essence of Plotinus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), 107. The Greek text may be found in the P. M. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer edition, *Plotini Opera*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 356.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase occurs sixteen times in the Gospels alone, and twenty-six times in the remaining books of the Christian Scripture.

<sup>11</sup> For these and other texts, see R. Panikkar, “Time and History in the Tradition of India: Kala and Karman,” in *UNESCO, Cultures and Time* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1976), 63–88.

<sup>12</sup> See Greek *pleres*, Latin *plenum*, Sanskrit *pūrṇa*, and also *pipartī*, “he nourishes.” They all come from the root *prā*, which means “to fill.”

<sup>13</sup> See the ancient Sanskrit word *jyā*, *-jī*, and the Latin *vivus*, *vita*, “alive, life.” Another term was *jivanam*, from the root *iv*.

<sup>14</sup> Related to the Greek *aiōn* and Latin *aevus*. The very word *aiōn*—from which comes *saeculum*, the temporal world, and also eternity—originally means “la force qui anime l’être et le fait vivre.” From here it comes to mean the World as a living Being, full of vital energy, *aiōn*. See E. Benveniste, “Expression indoeuropéenne de l’éternité,” *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris*, no. 38 (1937): 11.

<sup>15</sup> See *SB X.5.2.4*.

spirituality is deeply personal (as indeed the intra-Trinitarian relationships are personal), but it is not individualistic. It is a mature spirituality that has eliminated the *ego*, the *ahamkara*, and egoism. Time is not extrinsic to us; to "lose time" would be to lose being; to live time is to live life, and to live life is to live tempiternity.<sup>16</sup>

This attitude toward death could be a test of the cosmotheandric experience. If one is afraid of death, it is because he is afraid of Life; one is afraid of Life because he does not live it, and he does not live it because his *ego* is hanging on to his individualist *bios*, which will disappear like a drop of water when it falls into the sea. But whoever discovers he is water, and not a drop (though that is water in the form of a drop), is not afraid of losing his individuality. The price of not dying to the *ego* is not only not to be capable of rising up, but also not to be happy taking pleasure in Life.<sup>17</sup> Another thing altogether is the fear of the pain that often accompanies death. But here too, we should say that while pain hurts and should therefore be avoided, one should not necessarily be afraid of it.

If *my* time is *my* life, and this is *bios*, then it will be painful for my life to disappear; but if my life is my time, when I have discovered Life in life and the fact that it is not my own property, I shall take pleasure in Life in every tempiternal moment.

*In summary:* a cosmotheandric spirituality does not aim for temporal extension (of a linear time). The experience that we exist only for a limited time in this world and that we are offered the chance to *discover the tempiternal nucleus of our life* leads us to an attitude of serenity, of *Gelassenheit*, the source of happiness.

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<sup>16</sup> 16More and more essays criticize the greatest poverty in our ever-accelerating technocratic society: the lack of time (that has been changed into an object to be consumed and exploited). Not by chance, the first experiments made by Galileo Galilei aimed at studying acceleration.

<sup>17</sup> See Panikkar (1980/1).

## BEING AS EPIPHANY OF THE WORD

Being does not only have an intimate and intrinsic relation with Thought, as would seem to be the initial postulate of philosophy from Parmenides onward (sixth century CE). It is significant that the first Greek metaphor plays on the sense of sight: what we see is what we understand. The wisdom that comes from God is called "re-velation": it is what removes the veil of mystery and lets us see the truth unveiled. Now looking implies adopting an active attitude with the senses and the mind. Revelation has meaning only for a Being that sees. We must remove the veil in order to see and discover the truth. Other cultures, on the other hand, place more importance on hearing. In India the wisdom that comes from above is called *śruti*—that which is heard; and what is heard is the Word. The metaphor of hearing for understanding presupposes that we listen, receive, and are ready to allow the sound to penetrate, and through penetration understand its meaning. *Brahman* is also a sound (*śabda-brahman*). We would not speak if we had not previously listened, and we would not listen if our Being did not participate in the Being that speaks.

Of course, we should not interpret the above remarks as features exclusive to these two cultures. The Western tradition does recognize the importance of listening for faith, and its role in the word of God and the inner voice. "Faith comes from hearing," says the Christian Scripture (albeit in a different context).<sup>1</sup> Equally, India does not overlook the importance of seeing (*darśana*), both as presence before the sacred and as knowledge of truth. There are, however, differing sociocultural factors: for the Greeks, the eye is more penetrating than the ear, while for India and the Semitic traditions, hearing is more subtle than sight.

Now, in order to "see" a stone, a plant, a machine, or an argument and to arrive at its comprehension we must act as an active agent, directing our eye on to the object. But to "hear" the same thing, if this is our way of reaching understanding, we must act as a passive agent and receive the sounds emitted by the "object in question." The first case leads to experiment (we look at things), while the second leads to experience (things speak to us); the first is more of an active intervention and the second more of a passive participation. There must be light for me to see a stone, and there must be air for me to hear the sound of a stone falling—but I am the one who must perform the act of seeing and also the act of listening. To understand here means literally to stand under the sound (the incantation) of the thing thus understood.

At the heart of a traditional culture, be it Western, Indic, Chinese, or African, we could assert that the personal response to the speaking Being is expressed simply through the attribution of names for each thing. In this context the name is not intended as a mere sign, but as the link between the thing (named) and the "namer." A name actually touches the soul of the thing, as suggested in the biblical story of Adam, who gave a name to all things.<sup>2</sup> Language

<sup>1</sup> See Rom 10:17.

<sup>2</sup> See Gen 2:19–20. See *RI'X*.71.1: "When the wise ones began to give a name to all things."

is not just a technique; it is a creation.<sup>3</sup> While on the one hand nominalism has enabled us to use abstraction and concepts all the way through to modern science, on the other it has alienated us from things and from our personal relationship with them.

We may postulate that "life" means only human life: we can assert the axiom that "time" is just the measure of material movement in space. We can manipulate terms because they are our own invention for heuristic purposes, but we cannot do the same with words, which have their own history. They have been passed down to us and bring with them connotations that elude our ability to establish what we think they should mean. Terms are epistemic signs that we use to designate objects. Words are symbols that we come across in the exchange between people and things or human experiences.<sup>4</sup> Finding the right word is a difficult art. It implies entering into creative symbiosis with the linguistic universe of a culture and enriching it with an original contribution—even when it is just a nuance. The spirituality of the word requires, first, knowing how to listen to the original Word (which in turn requires silence). Second, it requires knowing how to listen to the voice of others, especially the voices of the wise (which in turn requires attention and love). Third, it requires knowing how to transmit what is suggested to us by the things themselves by communicating what the spirit inspires us to say.<sup>5</sup> And so every authentic word is a sacrament.<sup>6</sup> It is Being that speaks.<sup>7</sup>

Things to which we give a name, as distinct from objects to which we apply labels—that is, terms that identify them—are entities that have already come into our lives through something more than mere sensation, perception, or abstract knowledge. So as not to weigh down our language we say "things" in the most current sense of the word, but in this context, "things" includes events and experiences. In Buddhist terminology the word *dharma* indicates the path, the norm, and the universal law that informs reality, but also means each single thing in its function as incarnation of Life—that is to say, it is both the thing and the life of the thing in harmony with Life. These things are in a living relationship with us, which is precisely what constitutes their uniqueness and non-interchangeability. We also know from experience that not every name is suitable for denominating in an authentic way those things that are part of the warp and weft of our life. Despite our "literacy," the cultures that are most alive are the oral ones. Indeed, spoken languages are dialects. There is an academic dialect just as there is a dialect in the Trastevere quarter in Rome and a dialect proper to each generation. It is not for us now to comment on the influence of instruments of mass communication; it suffices to mention them in order to realize how far we are from the immediate intuition of the Word, and the change this fact represents—and that we must take note of, although it is not a case of turning to the past out of nostalgia.

We have said that Being speaks and that we must therefore listen to it. Cosmotheandric spirituality is a spirituality of listening. We have also said that listening requires attention to the voices of the Word. This is obedience in its deepest sense, as the word itself suggests (*ob-audire*).<sup>8</sup> When Man obeys reality and does not wish to dominate it, he hears it speak; he listens to the language of Being and begins to decipher it. We learn to read, but we have neglected the teaching of listening. This is the approach that I have called

<sup>3</sup> See Panikkar (1994/54).

<sup>4</sup> See Panikkar (1980/3).

<sup>5</sup> See Lk 21:14, etc.

<sup>6</sup> See Mt 12:36.

<sup>7</sup> See Panikkar (1990/33).

<sup>8</sup> The Greek word puts a stronger emphasis on this relation. *Audire* is related to *aisthanomai*, to perceive. See *aisthesis*, meaning both sensation and knowledge.

*ecosophical*. Ecology has made great progress in curtailing the exploitation of nature, but has not yet changed the relationship of dominance on the part of man. Ecosophy is not magic in the sense that Man could hear the stones speak or understand birdsong—although as a hypothesis it cannot be excluded.<sup>9</sup> Rather, we would say (to avoid confusion) that nature does not express itself in words; it is only Man that speaks, but nature can speak through him when he does not alienate himself from it, and is able to be its voice and not its master. The classical *vivere secundum naturam* does not necessarily mean returning to a crude "primitivism" or ignoring nature's behavior and the "laws" of the material world, but rather a positive and natural symbiosis.

At this point we should clarify one point: not all words are *dabar*, *śabda*, *logos*, or divine; not all words are the voice of nature. We must learn to listen just as we learn to read—to read the book of nature, as they put it in medieval times, when reading and listening went together because reading was done aloud. If reading is a science, then listening is an art as well. But the human word is also a human *logos*, and just as there may be a lie in the human *logos*, there can also be noise in the word of nature.<sup>10</sup> The sound of this word has silence as its upper limit and noise as its lower. Contemporary Man lives in the clangor of the "civilization of machinery." A good proportion of humanity lives in an acoustically dazed world, morphogenically bombarded by artificial waves and sociologically forced into an acceleration that breaks the silent rhythms of nature. Cosmotheandric spirituality cannot ignore this fact and believe that every sound comes solely from a divine nature. There is moral evil, but there is also acoustic evil and the exasperation of the senses. We have said that *fuga mundi*—in this case, blocking our ears—is not the answer. Undeniably there is acoustic pollution, and if spirituality is the art and the science of dealing with our human condition, then we can ask ourselves if it is possible to transform the "mundanal ruido" into "mundanal silencio"—the wordly din into secular silence. Is there an alchemy that can transform the noise of the world into quiet?

In the first place, not all noise is exclusively acoustic noise. Every noise is a cause but also an effect of a stridency in the soul, and a manifestation of the fact that there is also disharmony in reality. Its name is evil, which is not only moral evil. Just as fighting one evil with another only multiplies the evil, fighting noise with more noise is not the answer. We have all experienced how responding to someone who is shouting by speaking calmly usually achieves a change of tone, and not only acoustically. Our inner calm has transforming power.

This is an almost banal example, but it could represent the alchemic transformation we mentioned. Individually, perhaps, we can do little against the acoustic contamination that surrounds us almost constantly, but by joining with others, results have already been obtained, albeit minimal ones. The suffering of acoustic pain may also lead us to seek a little more silence both within and around us. You can certainly get used to the noise of airplanes or traffic if you live near an airport or a noisy road, but this kind of physiological adaptation should be the occasion for greater cultivation of inner silence and commitment to reduce the external noise. True spirituality takes evil very seriously and does not succumb to it. We should remember that the lotus flower grows in the putrid waters of the swamp. The noise of the city can encourage us to cultivate inner serenity and to seek or create spaces for silence in our lives that will, to allow the paradox, propagate like silent waves out into the universe.

<sup>9</sup> See the lovely chapter by Rilke (1987) cited previously.

<sup>10</sup> See the moving account by the eleventh-century poet and philosopher Alan of Lille. See Panikkar (1995/9).

In summary: cosmotheandric spirituality has a greater tendency toward listening to reality than to an aggressive interventionist approach to it, even if motivated by the best intentions. It is a rather feminine attitude that leads us to a humanization of all our relations, starting with nature and culminating with others like us. The word is a human characteristic *par excellence*. Cosmotheandric spirituality puts the emphasis on our humanity.

## THE WORD AS SOUND OF SILENCE

Being speaks, Being is not lifeless, and Life is manifested in the Word. Being speaks *in* Man and speaks *to* Man, when he is not alienated from Being, when he does not seek to break his bond to Being, when he allows Being to be in its integrity. This is the power of Man, who can interfere in the harmony of reality—and disturb the music of the heavenly spheres, as the ancients said. Disorder occurs when roles are inverted: when the word invades silence instead of letting itself be generated by it. This disharmony would be the homeomorphic equivalent of original sin: Man wants to take possession of the Word, and does not let it spring from the Silence to which he is listening. Here is not a word that breaks the silence, but a silence that brings forth the word—the word that springs from silence as the Christian liturgy of Christmas proclaims,<sup>1</sup> echoing the Vedas when they describe the word as “the womb of the universe.”<sup>2</sup>

“In the beginning was the Word,” as we have already noted, but the Beginning is not the Word. The Beginning is Silence, where the Word is born, in the words of St. Ignatius, bishop of one of the first cities of culture in his time: Antioch.<sup>3</sup> This is not a paradox: the Word as “firstborn of the Truth,”<sup>4</sup> as the first “emanation,” “creation,” “child” . . . of the Beginning comes from Silence. The Word is fundamental—there is nothing before it—but it is generated. It is not the Origin, but comes from Silence; otherwise it could not be fundamental. The symbol of Silence is Nothingness.

We say “creation” in order to emphasize that the Word comes from Nothing, although the gnostic expression would be “emanated” and the Christian “generated” by one who generates and therefore can only be called Father, and whose “nature” is Nothingness, since all that “was” (that is) he has given (gives) to the Son, the *Logos*, the Word.<sup>5</sup>

In any case every word, since it partakes in the Word, is a sacrament, as we have already seen: it “creates” what it authentically utters. It is a common human experience that every real word is not the mere repetition of another term but almost a materialization of the reality that the word stands for—something similar to an incarnation. We truly say something when our word is virginal, when it does not repeat but springs spontaneously from the womb of reality, where the word resides. And so we may be asked to account for every vain or useless word we speak.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ws 18:14–15.

<sup>2</sup> AB II.38.

<sup>3</sup> See Panikkar (1989/21).

<sup>4</sup> RV I.164.37; and also TB II.8.5.

<sup>5</sup> See Panikkar (1989/21).

<sup>6</sup> See Mt 12:36.



Letting silence speak may sound like a paradox, if we interpret it as silence speaking. Silence is silence because it does not speak; but silence is also silence because it does not close in on itself and drown in its own silence; rather, it is the very condition by which the word can spring forth. Silence is the condition for the word to be able to exist. The word exists because silence makes it possible, but silence too comes into Being because the word reveals it, covering it with its sound as light reveals darkness (which in turn makes light visible) by cloaking it with its luminosity.

Cosmotheandric spirituality lets words spring from the very silence of things and allows them to speak through the human word. Thus the human word becomes a revelation of the reality of what things really are. If the origin of words is found in silence, no word can make the claim to be the exact and definitive word and no meaning can be final and unequivocal, because silence does not determine its own interpretation. One characteristic of this spirituality is pluralism, which does not mean anarchy of meaning.

Most doctrinal discussions arise from the fact that verbal concepts are constructed that, Being distanced from the original silence, tend to be rendered absolute.

Our title here is not so much a real oxymoron as an apparent one, because we are not accustomed either to listening to Silence or to the holistic awareness that is above analytical thought—"componendo et dividendo," as Thomas Aquinas puts it.

The sound of Silence is related to the "music of the spheres" (Pythagoras)—but it would appear that Pascal had never heard it, and was therefore frightened by the "silence of infinite spaces." The sound of Silence is the Word (once again in a Trinitarian or *advaita* relationship). This represents an important point in our spirituality because the Word is not, as it is often interpreted, identical to its meaning—that is, to its intellectual content. Certainly there is the inner word and every word is a word and not just acoustic noise because it has a meaning; but the word is a full and real word inasmuch as it contains the constitutive quaternity of the word: the person speaking, a you being spoken to, an intellectual meaning, and a material sound. The Vedic intuition calls the word not just *vāc* (in Latin *vox*, voice) but also *śabda*—that is, sound or voice that the *mīmāṃsā* philosophy also considers the eternal sound. In both cases the word is voice, and therefore something material. The Trinitarian *Logos*, as Word of the Father, is of course a material reality. When the Father speaks (that is, generates the *Logos*), he creates all creation, says St. Thomas.<sup>7</sup> This is Matter as an integral part of the cosmotheandric reality or of the radical Trinity, as I have attempted to explain elsewhere. Word and Silence go forth in unison.

In summary: this spirituality tends toward silence more than to the univocal expression of every thing or event. It therefore becomes a tolerant spirituality not for strategic reasons, but by experience of human contingency that comes from having touched (*cum-tangere*) the mystery of Silence together with the mystery of the Word. In a nutshell, it is a spirituality of peace.

<sup>7</sup> *Sum. Theol.* I, q.34, a.3, etc.

## SILENCE AS OPENNESS TO THE VOID

There is no hermeneutics of Silence because any interpretation of it is an infringement of Silence itself. Interpretation is a task of the *Logos*, but Silence is not *Logos* and as such is devoid of Word. We cannot say that Silence is a Non-Being, because a Non-Being is not. Silence is the absence of Word and, from a logical point of view, "prior" to the Word, because it is what makes the latter possible. The Word is the organ of Being—its Firstborn. And so Silence will therefore be the absence of Being. It is not its negation—Non-Being, Nothingness (*ne-ullus*), Nothing (*non-ens*), but rather the Spanish *nada* (*non-natum*) or the Buddhist *śūnyatā* (vacuity)—not to be confused with modern nihilism.

In any case, in silence Man experiences the void—that is, pure absence. But absence can only be experienced as the absence of a presence, like waiting for something that is hidden in the presence but is not present, rather than a presence that is dissolved. Equally, the converse experience is also real and, in a certain way, more important from our point of view. It is the experience of presence, of an undefinable presence, which, when it is not ecstatic, takes form against the background of an absence that makes it possible. This absence is not perceived as a direct experience of absence; that would be a contradiction in that the absence would be present to our consciousness. Neither is it the absence of another Being that would be its complement or supplement; it is a kind of empty space that allows the presence of the present Being to occur, and that can move and exist, so to speak, and ultimately be. Contemporary philosophy of the "Kyoto School" has unified modern Western speculation with that of Oriental Buddhism, which enables us to overcome a certain nihilism while still recognizing its corrective value against a philosophy of Being that is too static.<sup>1</sup>

Mysticism over the ages has certainly emphasized the apophatic approach to reality. Thus we speak of the "ray of darkness," of "non-knowing," of the "cloud of unknowing," of "docta ignorantia," among others, without needing to cite Laozi, the Upanishads, the *Dhammapāda*, and many other Eastern texts. In any case, generally speaking the prevalent spirituality of our time, even in the East, is quite cataphatic.<sup>2</sup> This is the context in which the *kairos* of cosmotheandric spirituality appears. One could say that it represents a return to mysticism as a universal experience without falling into mysticism as a particular—or rather specialist—experience. I have tried elsewhere to describe mysticism as the vision of reality in its three dimensions—material, intellectual, and spiritual—corresponding to the three human organs of openness to reality that some traditions have described as the eye of the senses, the eye of the mind, and the eye of the spirit.<sup>3</sup>

1 See Heisig (2002) for a lucid and critical exposition of the three major exponents (Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani) and Yusa (2002) for an intellectual biography of the School's founder (Nishida).

2 See Panikkar (1948/2), where this problem was already raised.

3 "Oculus carnis, mentis et fidei," as Hugh of St. Victor has it.

"*Dei cognitio experimentalis*"<sup>4</sup> (an empirical—that is, direct and immediate—knowledge of God) is a classic Christian definition, from St. Bonaventure onward, of mysticism that cosmotheandric spirituality could accept, with qualification of the three terms of the definition.

Mysticism is certainly *cognitio*, knowledge, but in a wider and deeper sense than commonly intended. "Knowledge" would in this case be conscious contact and complete openness, including that of the senses; it is as much praxis as theory. *Experimentalis* stands for immediate and thus without the interpretation of any mental *cognitio*—and some traditions would also say conscious.

And so to knowledge of *Dei*—of God. Certainly, if by God we mean an icon of all reality, the mystery that has no name but that every name reveals and conceals, then the definition may be suitable for cosmotheandric spirituality, although the language is different.

*Cognitio* is not reflexive, *experimentalis* is not the object of any experiment, not even mental, and *Deus* is not a reality that is merely transcendent.

In summary: this spirituality tends toward a contact with all reality, while knowing that reality is infinite and mysterious in all its aspects. This spirituality overcomes the mental approach to reality, while not neglecting its intellectual dimension. It is a mystical spirituality.

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4 Bonaventure, *III Sent.* D.35, a.un. q.1, c.

## THE VOID AS SPACE FOR THE FREEDOM OF ACTION

The experience of the Void is a transforming discovery, and one that is at the same level as the discovery of Life. We are no longer the same, as it makes us discover what we really are and reveals to us our real "self"—and it is not our own exclusive property. It makes us discover the unfathomable depth of Being, the bottomless abyss (the *Ungrund*, as Rhineland mysticism calls it) of the reality that we all are—where the notion of "we are," this Being, is integrated, so to speak, into the horizon of the Void. We have already said that the Void is *not* the negation of Being. If we were to maintain that, we should fall into contradiction. The principle of non-negation must be overcome but not negated (which would implicate it in its own negation). The Void and Being are not one—not the same thing—but neither are they two. There is no predicate that can constitute an answer here. Once again, it is *advaita*. The fullness of Being is not lived except in the Void.

The discovery of the Void opens us up to the experience of freedom; nothing compels us, not even in the order of pure awareness; its space is empty. Rational thought must follow the laws of reason (the principle of noncontradiction) and take account of its objects—the things it thinks. In the Void there are no things. "Where [there is] the Spirit, there [is] freedom."<sup>1</sup> It is not freedom of thought, nor is it anarchy, but an overcoming of thought itself, as noted by numerous schools of spirituality.

It is this freedom of thought that leads us to freedom of action. Free human action is not a reaction; that is why it is not predictable. Let us start from the sociological order before moving on to the metaphysical.

The value attributed to human activity has gone through two extreme moments in the history of spirituality: from contempt for "servile tasks," in the Bible considered punishments and in traditional India activities unworthy of those "reborn" to a higher life, to the exaltation of human work as Man's contribution to the world's wealth, the well-being of humanity and his own self-fulfillment. As this evolution gradually occurred, contemplation, which had remained a specialist area detached from "active" life, lost its value within the spiritual life.

The Industrial Revolution, which began as the catalyst of an innovative human approach, transformed human action from an activity for Man's fulfillment into work for production with a purely economic end. Karl Marx's critique is valid in many of its analyses and excellent in its intentions, but erroneous in its conclusions because of the unilateral nature of its premises, just like capitalism for that matter. We seem to pass from one extreme to another, despite the numerous attempts to reach a compromise. Without entering into current controversies, it is significant, for example, to note how Christian thought, as it followed the times

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<sup>1</sup> See 2 Cor 3:17.

in the post-Marx period, began to rediscover the value of work,<sup>2</sup> to the point that it created a "theology of work" and even a "theology of earthly reality"<sup>3</sup>—although the latter is more like a positive assessment of secularity than an apologetics of work. The biblical starting point was not so much Yahweh's condemnation of Eve after the fall,<sup>4</sup> but God's phrase after creation—with a clear extrapolation of its sense, "Yahweh took the Man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it."<sup>5</sup>

It is also a particular sign of this period that the majority of Christian contemplative orders, when they moved to "missionary lands," abandoned their "contemplative" character in favor of "active works"—something perfectly comprehensible when we consider the social condition of the countries in question.<sup>6</sup> We could provide many more examples by citing the approach of Marxist philosophers toward less extremist positions.<sup>7</sup>

Cosmotheandric spirituality draws a clear distinction between cooperation with the dynamism of nature, human activity in "synergy" with creation, and modern work, which has become a means for "earning one's living"—an expression that sounds almost blasphemous if taken seriously. Living is not earned through work but through virtue, faith, love: with life itself. The money we earn is not life, but at best a means for procuring a reasonably comfortable existence. Work is labor (travail, from *tri-palium*, an instrument of torture). Man was not created to work but, as the Bible says, to cultivate a garden like an artist, not a "salaried hand."<sup>8</sup> The *Bhagavad-gītā* states explicitly that Man should be active, working to maintain the cohesion of this world (*lokasamgraha*), and thus fulfilling a cosmic function.<sup>9</sup> All human activity has ends that are exclusively selfish and therefore immoral.

This is the great contribution of spirituality that we are trying to outline; and it is at this point that the subject of the Void becomes important. Within a philosophy of Being every action has an end, as philosophy seems to have maintained from Aristotle onwards, and this leads to the search for a purpose in divine action too (despite one biblical text, albeit an ambiguous one).<sup>10</sup> But if we introduce the philosophy of the Void, true free action is not determined by an end. This is the often misunderstood sense of the *Bhagavad-gītā* when it tells us to perform our actions without regard to their fruits, which taken out of context could seem almost immoral.<sup>11</sup> We have something similar from some Christian mystics when they say that the "noble man" acts without a reason, like the "flower that blooms because it blooms."<sup>12</sup> Neither the future nor Being is predetermined. There is no pre that is *prior* to

<sup>2</sup> See Chenu (1952). See also the 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum* by Leo XIII, whose title is already an admission of lateness relative to Marx's *Das Kapital* of 1867 and the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. Also an admission is the title of Pius XI's encyclical of 1931, *Quadragesimo anno*.

<sup>3</sup> After the Second World War, toward the end of the 1940s, I myself was quite active in international (European) courses on a "Theologie der irdischen Gegebenheiten," on which I still have an unpublished work. See also Thils (1946) etc.

<sup>4</sup> Gen 3:17–19.

<sup>5</sup> Gen 2:15.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilfred (2000) for a recent assessment of this problem in India.

<sup>7</sup> Consider names like Bloch, Marcuse, Lukács, the Frankfurt school, etc.

<sup>8</sup> See the text of Gen 2:15.

<sup>9</sup> See BG III.20 and III.25.

<sup>10</sup> "Omnia propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus" (Prov 16.4)—which still contains a *propter*. Modern versions (surely closer to the original, but not to what I want to suggest in line with the medieval interpretation) give us, "Yahweh made everything for its own purpose."

<sup>11</sup> See BG III.4; II.35; XVIII.47.49.

<sup>12</sup> "Die Ros'ist ohn warumb; sie blühet, weil sie blühet, / Sie achtt nicht jhrer selbst, fragt nicht

Being. Being and the Void are in constitutive polarity. Their relation is not dialectical (that would be a contradiction) but a-dual (*advaita*).

To perform an action with this freedom requires total disinterest and a serene detachment that only a pure—that is, empty—heart can have. "Do not prepare your defense," says the Gospel.<sup>13</sup> Once again, we have a problem of time. The end of an action is different from the intention that drives it and is also different from the means adopted for its completion. Intention and means are certainly different from end. It is end that determines the other two. But this conceptual difference does not necessarily mean real separation. A spontaneous action, for example, does not exhibit such separation, and an act of pure love has its end in itself. A means is not necessarily an instrument. My pure heart is a means for an act of disinterested love, but it is not the instrument. To echo the words of Ibn al-'Arabi, the first time one goes to Mecca is in order to see the Ka'bah and build up merits for heaven; the second time is to see the Lord of the Ka'bah and enjoy his presence without regard for the merits to be acquired; the third time the mystic will go there is neither for merits nor for joy, but without an end; the end is inherent in the journey—and he will not see the Ka'bah or its Lord.

The spirituality we are dealing with can allow itself this freedom because in the experience of cosmotheandric *perichorêsis* we discover we are actually the field upon which the adventure of reality is played. The experience of the Void corresponds to the discovery of reality as *creatio continua*, to quote the Scholastics, or to *pratityasamutpāda*, to go with Mahāyāna Buddhism. Reality is constant novelty, a work of art. No one could have suggested to Beethoven how to compose the *Kreutzer Sonata*.

In summary: cosmotheandric spirituality does not tend toward the conquest of something that we do not (yet) have because we are conscious of what we are; we are conscious of Being at the cross-over point of the three dimensions of reality, conscious that this consciousness is not "ours," and conscious that inasmuch as it is "ours" it is still weighed down by all our imperfections and limitations. But it is here that true freedom lies.

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of Man sie sihet" (A. Silesius [1960]).

<sup>13</sup> Lk 21:14.

## ACTION AS DISCOVERY OF THE WORLD

Man is free because the Void does not determine him but leaves him space for freedom; reality, however, is not just Vacuity. Things offer resistance to Man's action, and this resistance enables us to discover things as real. But this resistance is not insuperable. Man can change the shape of things and the course of events. We shall deal first with things and then with events. "World," in fact, can mean the material world of things or the world of human events.

Man's action upon the material world is the great speciality of modern science. Our spirituality cannot forget this fact. We have achieved a knowledge of the world that must be integrated into contemporary spirituality. It must be emphasized that it is not just the problems of, for example, bioethics that we must not ignore, but above all the profound visions of contemporary science regarding matter and life: we are approaching the Mystery from a new angle that both enriches and transforms many of the most ancient attitudes toward the world, and the body in particular. Since this is a well-known and amply studied topic, for reasons of brevity and not importance we shall turn our attention to the more holistic meaning of the term "world."

From a cosmological perspective it seems that the primary meaning of world is the cosmos in its entirety: "What is the world if not the (visible) apparition of the invisible God? What is God if not the invisibility of the visible?" as one Christian philosopher and mystic puts it.<sup>1</sup> The second meaning is this world—our planet Earth. Man's vision of this world oscillates between two poles of symbolic understanding, the first Being the solidity and therefore centrality of the earth and the second its fertility and, consequently, its vital aspect.

These two poles can be seen by Man according to a double symbolism. On the one hand the earth is terra firma, solid ground—what is not sea. On the earth Man stands on his feet. The earth, precisely because of its solidity, represents the primary symbol of the center, the stable axis, the nucleus of that symbolic matrix of orientation and centrality. The sacred tree, the holy rock, the pillar, the kingpin, the central mountain, and so on are all cosmological symbols that center, fix, and orient Man toward the ultimate—divine totality, or the One.<sup>2</sup> In reality, most branches of philosophy recognize the cosmos as something given and also allow the phenomena that constitute the world as a starting point of thought, however different their interpretations of such phenomena or such a given: the world could be no more than a great illusion or it could be everything that exists, but in either case it must be accepted above all for what it "is," whether that be appearance or reality. In this context it does not matter if the world is the planet Earth or the astronomical universe. Medieval Scholastics considered the world to be the prime fount of knowledge—"what is in the intellect was first

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Trialogus de posset*, final part.

<sup>2</sup> See Eliade (1949).

in the senses ("quod in intellectus est, primo in sensus erat").<sup>3</sup> It is the senses that are witness to reality itself, and the senses are the witnesses to the reality of the earth.

The centrality of the cosmic in realist and empirical philosophy is evident, and even to the present day one of philosophy's main interests has always been the search for the *Grund*, or even the *Ugrund*—the foundation or the primordial abyss of all things. Transcendental philosophy must first of all know what it is trying to transcend; *laukika* (what belongs to daily life—the ordinary) has to be known in its own terms before we can speak about *lokottara* (what is beyond the commonplace—the extraordinary). Revelation as a fount of knowledge, which at first sight seems to ignore cosmic "laws," often presupposes the cosmic dimension as sacrament, symbol, or hierophany. In short, the earth is matter, substance, and also the center of our thought.

However, the earth is also what is under the heavens, and although distant, it is under the influence of the heavens—whether the stars or the divine.

The earth not only provides a foundation for reality but produces reality. The earth is fertile; it is the womb of Beings. It receives the seed of the divine and transforms it into abundant life. The earth is the place where the divine manifests its generosity and its power to man. The earth gathers up the multiplicity of the world in its folds; its task is to embrace and make room for all Beings. It is through change that we grow and live. The earth, as the seat of change, becomes the terrain of faith. It is purely by an act of faith that the farmer sows his seeds, that the fisherman casts his nets; it is solely by an act of trust that we take it for granted that the sun will rise each day, that all the elements of the cosmos will have the same properties tomorrow as they have today, that the air will still carry radio waves, copper will conduct electricity, and so forth. The earth is anything but pure passivity. In short, the earth is matter—and also *materia prima*. Despite the differences, there is a profound intuition in the fact that physical matter is referred to with the same term as metaphysical matter (*materia prima*).

If we are not sensitive to this double symbolism of the earth and fail to grasp the relationship between the two poles, we risk having a mistaken interpretation of the solidity of the earth by reducing it to substance, opacity, impenetrability, or a wall that separates the two worlds, and we also risk converting receptiveness into manipulability, probability, and mere tangibility: that is, materialism. Conversely, the earth may be thought of as a trampoline in order to transcend it. It then becomes a means for jumping higher; this is what gives us the dynamism for self-transcendence. In short, the earth is *energy*.

The task for humanity is to rebuild the body, dismembered by self-immolation, of Prajapati, the father of the Gods in Hinduism,<sup>4</sup> and to cooperate in the growth of the Mystical Body of Christ so that "God may be all in all."<sup>5</sup> Ultimately it is a question of taking part as spectators, actors, and also coauthors in the adventure of reality. But if we are rather passive as spectators in the unravelling of the universe, as actors we have our role within which there is free space to perform it well or less well. Yet at the same time we are co-authors of the lyrics of Life (to

<sup>3</sup> The original Aristotelian phrase should not necessarily be interpreted, as some Scholastics have, as Being contrary to the illuministic theory of Plato. See Leibniz's addition to the Latin phrase: "nisi intellectus ipse": everything comes from the senses except the intellect itself. See Sherrard (1995) and other works of his for a critique of the West for having forgotten the divine origin of knowledge—as St. Bonaventure maintained with "esprit de finesse" in his defense of Aristotle's phrase, saying that it is only true for abstract thought and not for the knowledge of God and the soul. See *II Sent.*, d.39, a.1, q.2 final part (*Opera Omnia*, Quaracchi, 2:904).

<sup>4</sup> See chap. 3 in Panikkar (2000/XXVII).

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 15:28.



allow the metaphor), which gives us even greater freedom, and with it greater responsibility and dignity. If the freedom of the spectator is limited to encouraging the actors, with nothing more than our enthusiasm, to make the show a success, the freedom of the actors is far greater because it allows for personal interpretation; but as coauthors we have in our hands, at least partially, the destiny of the universe.

But third, world also means the human world.

Speaking more concretely, Man lives in a *polis*, and the *polis* is not extrinsic to his Being. Therefore, in transforming ourselves we also transform society.

Man is not an isolated individual; he is community, *polis*, or a political animal as Aristotle calls him—to be more precise, a living Being (*zōon*) by his nature (*physis*) political, a citizen (*politikon*).

The spirituality we are trying to describe is human—indeed, eminently human—and therefore does not just aim to reach heaven, *nirvāṇa*, or the salvation of the individual, but is also engaged in the building of a just society. As we have already said, it is a secular spirituality; it is concerned with the kingdom of justice among men—although it knows that neither perfect justice nor perfect happiness is of this world.

Commitment to the *polis* is an essential feature of this spirituality, which is not limited to the perfecting of a disincarnate spirit nor to a dehumanized individual. Human perfection, to which this spirituality tends, is not individualist. The hermit is not necessarily individualist; neither is *fuga mundi* necessarily selfish. There are situations in which solitude is necessary, but this is not to be confused with isolation. A hermit who lives alone in his hermitage on a mountain can be in communion with humanity and therefore have a more efficacious impact on the political life of a place or a nation than hundreds of “activists” who, in any case, have their role too.

This spirituality does not separate spirit from matter, but moreover it does not separate people from each other. This is not to say that it does not respect the ontonomy of every being—an ontonomy that requires the discovery of the inter-in-dependence of every thing and respect for the different levels of freedom of every individual particle in reality.

Commitment to the *polis* heals us of an illness that has infected some kinds of spirituality that have separated the sacred from the secular, as we have already seen. This commitment obviously requires knowledge of the world of politics in its broadest and noblest sense. For too long spirituality has been separated from politics, with sad results for both. It is one thing to have a healthy and necessary separation between church and state as a reaction to the theocracy and Caesar-pope of Islamic, Christian, and Jewish history, but quite another to divorce religion from life or spirituality from politics. Having already dealt with the subject at some length, I can allow myself some brevity here.<sup>6</sup>

One aspect, though, does need to be pointed out, in harmony with all the preceding ones. The spirituality we are speaking about could be characterized by one of the Beatitudes in the gospel of Christ: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.”<sup>7</sup> The metaphor is a powerful one: it does not speak of the search for justice (*dikaioyne*) or of the struggle to establish it in the world, but of hunger and thirst and therefore of a real, almost physiological, need for justice, for something without which we would die. This is no small matter like a supplement to perfection or a “holy desire” but a vital necessity for survival. Moreover, if we hunger and thirst for justice it means that we do not actually have it—that we cannot be nourished with it because it is not present in the world. One might say it was a very scarce

<sup>6</sup> See Panikkar (1999/XL).

<sup>7</sup> Mt 5:6.

commodity—both then and now. And that is not all. The Gospel adds something hard to believe—almost a Zen *koan*. The text goes on to say, “they shall have their fill.” When? After twenty centuries, justice has not yet appeared on the earth, not to mention the millions of victims of hunger and war. A very common interpretation, but for many an unconvincing one, is that of eschatological exegesis: at the end of time or at the end of life justice will be reestablished. In the meantime the dead are dead, the massacred are massacred, and justice is trodden underfoot. It may be small consolation to believe that in another life justice will triumph, given that meanwhile, in this life, it continues to be lacking. This is a great challenge, and not only for Christians, because the problem is a universal one.

I would be tempted to say this represents the hallmark of a genuine spirituality, because it is not an exclusively rational issue.

The question remains unresolved, but I should like to advance my hypothesis, which is not limited to my own personal experience, though it has no universal proof.

Our beatitude does not say blessed are the victims, but blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied—because before they die of hunger and thirst they will have discovered that death is not the great tragedy, that pain is a human condition, and that inner peace and joy are a gift that we can receive even in prison or in a pauper’s death. This is not a superficial consolation but a deep experience of life that is divine in our mortality and joyful in our sufferings.

We have not yet finished. Those who hunger and thirst try to satisfy their hunger and thirst; they launch into action and so discover the world, or rather the kingdom of heaven.<sup>8</sup> The world is not a conceptual product of our “theories”; the world is known by “praxis” and through our actions upon it. We shall be “satisfied” to the extent that we have made the effort to quench our thirst. Cosmotheandric spirituality needs action as much as it does contemplation.

In summary: the spirituality we are speaking about does not aim to rebuild paradise on earth, nor to project all hope into another world. It considers the *saeculum* and its structures realistically—that is, as real—but not as the whole of reality; it knows that Man must seek justice on this earth, but that the kingdom is in our inner self, which also includes others in their deepest dimension. In short, it is a secular spirituality.

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<sup>8</sup> See Mt 11:12.

## THE WORLD AS THE HABITAT OF MAN

The world offers resistance to our actions, but in so doing it reveals not only its own reality but ours as well. Through my encounters and collisions with the world I discover my own reality—that is, the fact that I too am part of the world, that I am world, matter, time, and space, and not just knowledge, intellect and mind, even though it is with these latter faculties that we discover the former. We have already mentioned elsewhere the dangers of angelism, which is the confusion of Men with angels, the belief that the perfect Man is the angelic Man or the one most similar to an angel. In the field of spirituality, especially Asian spirituality, this corresponds to so-called *acosmism*—that is, the belief that Man has fallen into *samsāra* but is not a part of this cosmos, which is accorded no ultimate reality. For the *acosmic sādhu*, the world and men, being “worldly,” do not really exist; they are not real. Other forms of spirituality too, although less extreme, maintain that the world does not belong to ultimate reality since it is transient and mortal.

Cosmotheandric spirituality presents a very radical novelty: it is distinct from materialism on one side (because matter is not everything) and from idealism on the other (because matter belongs to everything). It does not deny mortality or contingency; it does not deny that from the intellectual perspective matter has a level of reality inferior to that which our consciousness attributes to the spirit, but emphatically defends the fact that the material dimension of reality, and with it space and time as such, belong to reality no more and no less than consciousness and the divine.

The habitat of Man is the material Earth, or rather the Earth is the mother of man, but he is also the son of Heaven, his Father, in *advaita* harmony. We are earthly as much as we are heavenly; material reality belongs to us as much as spiritual reality. The harmony here is not the balance of two equal parts or of two halves—just as we are not halfway between our father and our mother and Christ is not half God and half Man. The harmony is *perichōresis* or natural co-penetration, as in the Trinity. Neither pole exists without the other.

Man is not just “man”; he is also cosmic, and his destiny is not independent of the universe’s destiny. We are not just pilgrims in this world; it is also our home, and all earthly values are human values. The fact that we are (also) earthly Beings represents the positive aspect of evolutionary theory, even though evolution would not be an acceptable theory if it claimed that the divine mystery was superfluous, just as it is even more unacceptable to hold the dualistic compromise whereby the soul is something infused by God into a body brilliantly prepared by Nature. The initial proposition of this paragraph should be inverted: the cosmos is not only “cosmic” but also human, and its destiny is not independent of Man’s. We have already said that “God,” “Man,” and “Cosmos” are three abstractions of the undivided reality that is the fruit of our minds, albeit *cum fundamento in re*, as the Scholastics would say—that is, with a basis in reality (as in the Trinity).

In any case, Man is earthly, and his activities on earth have a definitive importance for him. In other words, history is real and its course does not leave us untouched. It is a corollary of the *sacred secularity* that we have called metapolitical.<sup>1</sup> The importance of history for human salvation is the extraordinary legacy of Judaism (of course, this does not mean we accept its interpretation).

But Man is not just *polis* or community; he is also person—that is, a unique knot in this community net made up of the threads of society, of history, and also of the universe. These threads make up the knots that support them and which, in turn, are sustained by them (once again, *perichôresis*). As a knot each of us is unique, and this uniqueness of ours is above all *corporeal*.

My thoughts are mine, but they may also belong to many others who share them; the same goes for feelings, which may also be shared, but not for bodily sensations. A certain bodily feeling, like a specific pain, is mine and belongs to me alone in a way that is very different from an intellectual intuition. The ancients themselves maintained that what makes us individual (the “principle of individualization”) is matter, and more precisely quantified matter (“*signata quantitate*”). To put it briefly, every body is unique and individual. We are persons, but always individuals; and our individuality resides in our body. Without a body there is no man. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, as Scripture puts it.<sup>2</sup>

In today's world, especially in the West, the notion of body has undergone a reassessment (sometimes to the point of paroxysm) perhaps as a reaction to forms of spirituality over the centuries. It is no longer a novelty today to reaffirm the fact that I not only have a body, but I am a body—albeit not only body. We are therefore beginning to accept that the psychosomatic unity of Man is not merely a union of two substances (*res cogitans—res extensa*), but a primordial unity of Man that is not just body and not just soul, nor indeed a simple juxtaposition of the two. Postmodernism has not yet reached the point of a more complete tripartite anthropology as body-soul-spirit, which is more in line with cosmotheandric spirituality. However, we are still a long way from introducing the value of the body into contemporary political discourse. One example—which would be scandalous if it were not for the undoubted goodwill of most politicians of our time, especially economists and lawmakers—is the way in which economic and human rights issues are discussed in the same breath as principles or bare statistics: a body that is dying of hunger is an abstract number; water sources that have been polluted by industry with millions of victims each year is not a priority for international organizations.

I use these examples because we are making the point that cosmotheandric spirituality is not disincarnate.

Cosmotheandric asceticism cultivates not only the soul but also the body. It is significant that modern mass education has neglected not only the spirit but also the body, and reduced physical culture to gymnastics or yoga and martial arts courses for a small elite.

The human body is sexual; all of man, and not only his body, is a *yin-yang* polarity that cannot be reduced to the physiological male-female dichotomy. The Human being is androgynous, albeit with predominant characteristics and distinct physiological constitutions. The spirituality we are describing has nothing to do with sexual abuses and obsessions, but is a form of life that integrates both our body and our sex in the spiritual life.

In this unified vision it is not our task to get into all the details regarding marriage, celibacy, friendship, *yoga*, *tantra*, and, in general, bodily participation in spiritual life. We

<sup>1</sup> See Panikkar (1999/XL).

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Cor 6:19; etc.

shall just give an example, albeit seemingly marginal: the *spirituality of conversation*, which also implies that of dialogue. Without dialogue between Men (and cultures) there can be no peace on earth.<sup>3</sup>

Above all, conversation requires physical presence. Conversations on the Internet or on television can be a substitute, but they are not the same thing. A human conversation—that is, between persons each of whom is a source of knowledge—is not a simple exchange of ideas; it therefore needs time, attention, and bodily presence. Man is a being of dialogue and fulfills his humanity through the word. Conversation is the great school of humanity, tolerance, education and learning. For centuries culture has been passed on through conversation, and even today the seat where the destinies of peoples are decided is called a “parliament.” The classical countries had an agora or at least a piazza. There is a need to reevaluate rhetoric. The purpose of conversation is not just to clarify ideas, exchange information, or convince others; conversation is made without a precise aim, for the “pleasure” of conversation, because talking is in our nature (*Homo loquens*). You cannot make war while you are talking, no matter how violent the rhetoric may be.

In summary: cosmotheandric spirituality does not aim to conquer the Earth or to reach Heaven, but to achieve the fullness of Man. It is a spirituality of incarnation, because it sees the divine in Man.

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<sup>3</sup> See Panikkar (2002/XLVIII).

## MAN AS PARTAKER IN THE DIVINE

The spirituality we are describing is fundamentally human (how could it be otherwise?). But Man is not an isolated Being extraneous to the Earth and a stranger to Heaven. Certainly he is between Heaven and Earth because he partakes in both, as the mediator (priest) between them. Without the Earth, Man is not man, but in the same way he is not himself without Heaven. Cosmotheandric spirituality helps Man to live what he is: not an intermediary but a mediator between Heaven and Earth; it must therefore guide him in earthly things and in his pilgrimage toward the Divine—toward a Fullness that is not simply biological but that reaches the totality of Life (*zôê*).

It is not a question of lowering God down to the level of Man and the world, but of raising Man and the world up to the height of God—of that Divinity that is present in all things. The word “dimension” may not be perfect for expressing the intra-relatedness of these three constituents of reality while still maintaining their hierarchy, but I have not found a better one.

Man as a personal Being, as an I with the capability and necessity of finding a *you*, is also called by a higher force that confers an I on him by calling him *you*. This I is the Divine. Man, as such, is called by a “something” that is not himself, but that he recognizes as transcendent precisely because he feels the call in his inner self—in his immanence. Man is called by an “Other,” which may manifest itself to him through other people near him, but only when it discovers an Other in him—and in any case not separate from his neighbor. This calling Force may be called Heaven, Beauty, Nature, *Nirvāṇa*, the All, the Void, Being, Love. . . . All these words, although they are not synonyms and have different meanings, are the homeomorphic equivalents of “that” that in most traditions is usually called God.

The word “God,” aside from the understandably adverse reactions it may provoke and the caricatures it has inspired, is not a universal symbol. There are spiritualities that do not feel the need for such a name, even though they cannot actually do without something “superior” to man.

The human person cannot accept that something superior to Man is not personal. At the same time, he is too aware of his own limitations to be content with a cheap anthropomorphism that makes God a projection of man, albeit in super-man guise.

Cosmotheandric spirituality reveals the divine dimension in all reality that transcends everything, but that could not be transcendent if it were not at the same time immanent.

This transcendence needs a name, as well as an image. If we identify the image of Divinity with Divinity itself, then we fall into idolatry, and if we reject it, then we fall into atheism, which in turn leads to the absolutizing of Man, Society, Future, Country, or the Ideal. Man needs to believe in something that transcends him.

On this topic I have coined the term *iconolatry*, drawing a distinction between idol and icon. The former is a human construct, and we can have both an image and a concept of it;

the latter is the symbol of that Mystery we have called the Divine. It is not strictly an image, and we cannot have a concept of it.<sup>1</sup> The icon is the symbol of the Divine, and as it is a true symbol, what is symbolized is not separable from the symbol itself but neither is it identified with it.<sup>2</sup> The icon may be more or less accurate and may show with varying degrees of fidelity the attributes of the Divine in which the divine mystery is concealed: "God is hidden in his own attributes (qualities)—*guṇa*," says a sacred text.<sup>3</sup> Allah has ninety-nine names. Each name denominates him, but is not him. Meister Eckhart says that God is "un-nameable" and "omni-nameable."<sup>4</sup> But the symbol is a symbol not only when what is symbolized is hidden within it, but also when the symbolizer discovers the symbol as such and consciously takes part in the discovery. The symbol transcends the epistemic dichotomy between subject and object—without abolishing what I have called the symbolic difference.

In other words, the icon is only an icon for those who discover it and believe it to be such.

The *iṣṭadevatā* of Hindū spirituality represents an excellent example of an icon. *Iṣṭadevatā* is usually translated as the "divinity of our choice"—a choice, however, that is not of the individual, as a certain interpretation, influenced by modern individualism, may lead us to think.

Two *sūtras* by Patañjali, of three words each,<sup>5</sup> will help us understand the meaning:

*svādhyāyād iṣṭadevatā samprayogaḥ*

"through (by means of) contemplation (reflection, study, concentration, meditation, conscious devotion) [we achieve] union (communion) with the [appropriate icon of] Divinity chosen [by Divinity itself, by *karma*, by history, by culture or by free personal spontaneity]."

For this choice to be the appropriate one the following *sūtra* says we need:

*samādhi—siddhiḥ īśvara praṇidhānat*

"the total donation (devotion, concentration on absorbing the) Lord that leads to union (perfection)."

This is equivalent to stating that it is the divinity itself that makes the choice for us.

And this may also be the answer to the crucial question for a certain Western theism that is not ready to abandon the idea of a personal God, who is the *iṣṭadevatā*, the icon.<sup>6</sup>

Here we touch on a crucial theme in spirituality and a central point of the hiatus between East and West. It has been said many times that the stumbling block between these two cultural and religious worlds is the personal nature of the "living God" in the Semitic

<sup>1</sup> See Panikkar (1998/XXIII).

<sup>2</sup> See Panikkar (1981/9).

<sup>3</sup> See *SU* I.1.3.

<sup>4</sup> See the profound commentary of Lossky (1960), 41–96.

<sup>5</sup> *YS* II.44–45.

<sup>6</sup> This is the thesis of a recent book, much debated in the United States, which, while misunderstanding my position, interprets the symbol in a way similar to our description here: Roger Haight, SJ, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

(and also African) traditions and the "impersonal Absolute" of the Asiatic religions and of a certain type of abstract Scholastics.

We have here, above all, a serious misunderstanding that is due to a lack of intercultural knowledge. One need only observe that the very reasons that lead a Śāṅkara to deny God is a person (so as not to degrade God to the level of an anthropomorphism unworthy of him) are the same reasons that drive a Thomas Aquinas to claim God is personal (so as not to degrade God to the level of a thing without intellect or will). Cosmotheandric spirituality, being open to interculturality, helps us integrate these two conceptions of the Divine.

We certainly cannot reduce God to just an idea, nor to pure transcendence; we must be able to have personal relations with this Mystery. There is no relation without love, nor can we love a "dimension" or an idol in its place. On the other hand, an omnipotent God who is insensitive to evil or partial toward only one people is not even credible. If we want to call God a person we must so widen the notion that the human person will lose any real analogy and become nothing more than an abstract analogy that could be applied to any Being.

*Iṣṭadevatā* plays a fundamental role that an exclusively apophatic spirituality cannot perform: the divine initiative. Mysticism has been described as a divine *pati*, suffering, receiving, or feeling divine things. True spirituality is not a simple projection of our unsatisfied yearnings; it is not an invention of our intellect. Over the history of spirituality we constantly find the statement that no one seeks God if they have not already found him in some way—that is, if the initiative did not come from God himself.<sup>7</sup> The divine dimension is not something dead; on the contrary, it is the Life in which everything partakes.

The Christian theology of Christ as an icon of God, *Īṣvara* as a personal God, and *iṣṭadevatā* as a living icon, if seen as homeomorphic equivalents, can help us take a step forward. Homeomorphic equivalents, like third-level analogies, are not identical to each other and have conceptual, axiological, and historical differences, but they allow dialogue and therefore discussion.

It is also worth underlining that homeomorphic equivalents do not mean that Christ is similar to *Īṣvara* or *brahman* to *tao*, and so on. But they make possible intercultural dialogue because they refer to equivalent issues within their respective forms of thought, culture, or religion. For example, we cannot provide an answer to the problem of God in a religion that does not even pose the question. The first Christian missionaries in Korea had to convince the "pagans" that they were sinners before they could present the solution of a redeemer.

But let us return to our topic.

Cosmotheandric spirituality does not eliminate personalistic religiosity and a human relation with the Divine. A certain kind of anthropomorphism, inherent in any human activity, is one thing, but quite another is the absolutization of our representations of the Divine—or of reality. To qualify Protagoras, we could say that Man is not the measure of all things,<sup>8</sup> but that he is conscious of the fact that his *metron* is human and that this awareness allows him to transcend it humanly.

A cosmotheandric spirituality cannot cease to be human. Hence the importance of iconolatriy, provided that it is differentiated from idolatry. The iconolatric relation with the Divinity is completely personal. We have dialogue, love, prayer, and all the other human sentiments that have their home in our hearts. But the icon is the symbol of the Divinity: an indispensable symbol and the only human path toward the divine mystery. From this follows the necessity

<sup>7</sup> See Jn 6:44, which is echoed by the famous words of St. Bernard (PL 182.987), Pascal (*Thoughts* 553), and many others.

<sup>8</sup> See Plato, *Theaetetus* 152, and relative comments by Heidegger (1961, II:135–41).



for a symbolic knowledge that is distinct from conceptual knowledge. We cannot get to what is symbolized if we abandon the symbol, but equally we will never know the symbolized if we identify it with the symbol. We must not forget that Being itself can only be known as a symbol.<sup>9</sup> Once again we have arrived at the *advaita* relation. This is what makes cosmotheandric spirituality a form of spirituality that, by overcoming the barriers of the human, can be universalized, since it manifests itself in the various icons of the "Ineffable" we see in our "mystical" consciousness—which is not to say that all icons are similar to one another; we have already said that the homeomorphy we are referring to is a third-level analogy.

An example will help us avoid the need to delve further into this crucial issue.

For a couple of hundred years we have debated in the West whether "religion" should be taught in public schools, yet we do not debate whether physics is a neutral science or if the very notion of education can exist without the idea of *paideia* (translated by Cicero as *humanitas* and in German as *Bildung*—and not *Kultur*).<sup>10</sup> For understandable historical reasons, religion in the West is identified with an organization (single or multiple) and not as a living organism of human society itself, as is the case in nearly all other human cultures. In Western languages the word "spirituality" emerged almost spontaneously as a reaction designed to distinguish religiosity, as a constitutive aspect of human nature, from "official religions." This separation represents one of the West's deepest wounds and one of the major obstacles to mutual understanding between Western or Westernized civilization and the other cultures within humanity. The alternative is clearly not a theocracy. The alternative is an *advaita*—that is, trinitarian—framing of the issue.<sup>11</sup> Religious education (in this sense) is more essential for human life than, for example, "computer science." The belief that human rights or ethics in general can be founded upon pragmatic "self-interest" without any reference to the spiritual dimension of Man is the great modern Western heresy—made possible, we must emphasize, by the monopoly of religious institutions and their abuse of power.

Quite recently discussion has begun over whether the proposed Constitution of the European Union should include a reference to Judeo-Christian values or remain aseptically lay—that is, without any reference to the "religious" dimension of man.

Cosmotheandric spirituality cuts through this problem because it considers neither religion nor God to be a sectarian question, though this does not mean that the Judeo-Christian-Islamic history of Europe should not be mentioned in the Constitution.

The origins of this attitude are very deep-rooted in Western culture, but it may suffice to note one of the fundamental dates in its *iter*: the year 1625. "Etiam si daremus non esse Deum" (Even if we admitted there is no God)<sup>12</sup> was an assertion preceded by the tacit confession of Grotius, who called it a monstrous blasphemy, but which was accepted as a plausible and liberating hypothesis by many other theists. Here Europe betrays its sectarian conception of God. God is relegated to a superfluous hypothesis—and ethics to a limitation of human freedom. And, in fact, the West's "progress" developed in this very direction. Tolerance was achieved at the price of converting God into a "private affair." Cosmotheandric spirituality states very clearly that *this* God does not exist. The challenge for the contemporary world is therefore this: the (re)discovery of that mystery as a constitutive aspect of Reality.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Panikkar (1970/XI, 123–48).

<sup>10</sup> We are duty bound to cite the three volumes of Jaeger's classic work—Jaeger (1947).

<sup>11</sup> See Panikkar (1978/2).

<sup>12</sup> Huig de Groot (Hugo Grotius), *De iure belli ac pacis*, Prolegomena § ii.

<sup>13</sup> From the Christian point of view I have spoken of the passage from a tribal Christology to a cosmic Christophany in Panikkar (1999/xxxvii), 203–6 *et passim*.

In summary: cosmotheandric spirituality does not reduce God to a concept or an element over and above the elements of reality. *Totum in quolibet*, "Everything in all things," said Nicholas of Cusa, but all things are things because in some way they reflect the All. It is a *religious* spirituality.



## ÉPILOGUE

We are aware of the imperfection of this account, but at the same time of its importance. For this reason we shall summarize what has been said from a more existential standpoint.

For heuristic purposes I shall use separate paragraphs for things that are simple and correspond to a single and unique vision.

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1. This cosmotheandric vision must emerge spontaneously. We need a new innocence. Legal impositions or moral constrictions, important as they may be in their own contexts, are not needed; spirituality, in fact, cannot be imposed by order or by law, but must flourish freely in the very depths of our Being. Spirituality that is not free is not spirituality. Its currency is myth, and that is precisely what is accepted spontaneously.

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2. This spontaneity presupposes that our spirituality will maintain its independence, as far as possible, from philosophical and scientific hypotheses. The criterion for the authenticity of a myth is its meta-philosophical and meta-scientific nature. A myth is both polyvalent and polysemic. For many today, God and science are no longer myths but ideologies. The spirituality we are describing must not be compromised by such ideologies: it must hold true whatever the ideology we follow. This is the challenge to the contemporary mentality, which has confused the (rational) mind with the (intuitive) intellect.

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3. The Earth is neither inferior nor superior to Man. Man is neither the master of this world nor a simple creature born from a cosmic womb. The Earth is not even equal to Man. Equality implies a higher genus of which the two species are equal examples. Man is not a "species" of the genus "creature." On the contrary, Man and the cosmos are ultimate dimensions, and therefore not reducible to each other or to a higher entity. The relation is not a dualist one. Each is distinct from the other, but not separable. My head is distinct from me but it cannot be separated from me; it would cease to be what it is and so would I. The head is essentially the head of a body. The metaphor of the body is a traditional one and can be found in numerous cultures; however, like all metaphors, it has its limitations.

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4. Our relation with the earth forms part of our self-understanding. It is a constitutive relation. Being implies and presupposes Being in and with the world. There is a relation of ontonomy. I do not treat my stomach independently of my body, or of myself. I am convinced of the fact that what is best for my stomach is also best for me, even though I may sometimes be attracted more by quantity than by quality and overdo things by eating or drinking too much. This disharmony is evil. Once this holistic consciousness begins to build up, our relation with the earth will be of the same kind. It is not pragmatic recycling we need but a living symbiosis, a reciprocal rejuvenation, a spiral movement. If entropic phenomena exist in the universe, then so, analogously, do syntropic ones—the vital ones.

In the heyday of European individualism, the primary religious concern was the salvation of one's own soul. A more mature spirituality discovered that "the business of saving our individual souls" was neither a business nor a true salvation, because these individual souls do not exist on their own—and there is no soul without a body. We are all interconnected, and I can reach salvation only if in some way I incorporate the whole universe in the endeavor. *Auctis augendis*, I am saying that cosmotheandric spirituality makes us aware of the fact that we cannot save ourselves except by incorporating the earth in the same adventure—and, *minutis minuendis*, God too. Of course, the very idea of "salvation" is transformed. Both the prize and the punishment disappear: truly human actions are performed for themselves and not in light of an end extrinsic to them.

5. With this kind of spirituality, pan-monetary ideology is overcome. We do not live just to eat, but when we eat in the right way we live and let live, and the circle of life goes round. We do not work in order to earn money or to consume, but because human activity is part of human and cosmic life and sustains the whole organism. Accumulation implies a peculiar relationship with time. Money does generate power, but it is power, above all, over an uncertain future. Cosmotheandric spirituality sees fullness not so much in a future time as in a wider space that incorporates the "three times."

Our relationship with time is not something detached, as though time "ran" independently of our life. We do not just live in time, but we are time. In the same way space is not a "place" where we carry out our activities, but where we are (and not just where we happen to be)—it is the space of our life, the *corpus mundi*.

6. This spirituality overcomes the dichotomy between so-called natural mysticism as a lower form of union with the World or with Being and theistic mysticism as a superior form of union with God. Nature is nothing if not *naturata* (generated) and God remains equally an abstraction if he is not *naturans* (generator). If I climb the highest peak I will find God up there, but by the same measure if I penetrate the depths of an apophatic divinity, I will find the world there; in neither case will I have abandoned the heart of man. The "creation" of the world does not mean that the "creator" went away afterward; nor does the "incarnation" of God mean the "humanization" of one individual. All reality is involved in the same adventure—which is cosmotheandric.

This spirituality does not deny the great traditional intuitions, but places them in a wider frame. We could say that it reaches a "sensus plenior"—a more complete sense—that embraces traditional intuitions and transforms them in the very transmission (tradition).

7. This spirituality also heals another of the open wounds of modern Man: the gulf between the material and the spiritual, and with it between secular and sacred, inner and outer, temporal and eternal. We recall the words of Jesus in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas 22: "When . . . you shall make the inner part like the outer, the outer like the inner, the upper like the lower; when you shall make male and female one . . . then you shall enter into the Kingdom." It is not a question of blurring differences but of realizing interrelations and becoming aware of inter-in-dependencies and correlations. We speak of inter-in-dependence because all Beings have their own level of freedom within a harmony that is not "predetermined" but that can be disturbed—and that is the problem of evil. Man does not have a kind of dual nationality—one here and one up there, or one for now and one for after. Here and now he

inhabits an authentic reality that has many dimensions, but does not split human life into two parts in time or in space, or for the individual or for society. Service to the earth is divine service just as the love of God is human love. In short, despite the term "spirituality" that we have used to express this vision, it is not to be understood in contraposition to something "material" or to any other notion that divides reality. *Colligite fragmenta* has been a byword in the writing of this work.

8. Cosmotheandric spirituality demonstrates the definitive value of the spatiotemporal structures of reality, but not to the detriment of the divine dimension. The divine remains the aspect of the infinity and the liberty of every Being. Hidden in every Being, so to speak, that is, as the mysterious immanence of reality in all its "manifestations," is the divine "spark" that gives life to everything.

Cosmotheandric spirituality, as we have already mentioned, is a trinitarian spirituality. In this sense divine immanence does not mean pantheism. It does not claim that everything is God, but that everything is also divine just as the *Logos* and the Spirit are God and are not the Father, without Being confused between themselves.

This divine dimension imbues everything; it is everywhere but it is not all of reality; Man and the world have their own reality too in mutual inter-in-dependence, as in the *perichôresis* of Trinitarian tradition.

9. Cosmotheandric spirituality is the fruit of the *advaita* or trinitarian experience. *Advaita* or a-duality, as we have often mentioned, is neither monist nor dualist. Because of modern dialectical thought, European languages (and indeed I myself in less recent writings) have translated the word *advaita* as nonduality. But this translation may suggest that by negating duality one can reach the *advaita* intuition. The logical conclusion is then that of monism—not two, therefore one. The *advaita* intuition, however, is not reduced to a negation of duality: it would be far simpler just to affirm unity, *ekam, ekattva*—All is one. This is monism or pantheism—the logical consequence of the negation of any duality and therefore of any plurality. But the true *advaita* intuition is not logical; that is its problem and also its value. With *advaita* it is not a question of negating duality (nondualism) by maintaining unity, but neither is it affirming duality and negating unity. It is a question of surpassing dialectics as we do in the Trinity.

Under a dialectical interpretation of "neither one nor two" we get a contradiction, and as we fall into irrationality we have no chance of any intuition. But that is not *advaita*. The notion of *neti neti* takes us beyond the mental. So it is not a negation but an absence; it is an a-duality: an absence of duality between God and the world, Man and God and all other distinctions that our mind is quite rightly apt to make.

It is at this point that we introduce the vision of the third eye or mystical intuition, the *anubhava advaita* or a-dual experience. But how can we have a vision of absence, an experience of the primordial reality referred to in the *Rg-veda* (X.129.1): "In the beginning there was neither Being nor Non-Being"? We can "rationalize" by saying that nothingness is reached through the negation of Being. Indeed, that is how India discovered zero, which it called void or nothingness—*śūnya*:  $a - a = 0$ . From a formal point of view this is an ingenious discovery and the original foundation of mathematical science. Nevertheless, we are working in the field of abstraction, because in reality we cannot find a second *a*, equal to the first, in order to subtract it. Every Being has a unique, and therefore incomparable, identity. So a is

also unique and there is no second one. The mental operation is formally plausible, but that second a is not real. Zero does not exist and, as mathematics itself says, is not even a number (it is not odd or even and is not a multiple of one or of itself).

Discovering the vacuity of all things is the path of *nirvāṇa*, says Mahāyāna Buddhism, but this discovery discovers nothing (*non-ens*), even though as a discovery it is real: reality is discovered ("before" it ever was, some Eastern schools would say).

We have included this philosophical excursus in order to prepare the way for cosmotheandric spirituality, which presupposes the *advaita* intuition that is a homeomorphic equivalent of the Trinitarian vision.

God, Man, and World are neither three nor one: they are constitutive "dimensions" of reality. As Men we are mediators between Heaven and Earth (as the ancient Chinese said) and we partake in the divine and the cosmic without confusion over our respective identities.

If the word "religion" means what joins us to all reality, then cosmotheandric spirituality is the religion that allows us to reach communion in a natural way with the divine, with Men and with matter.

This religiosity is not necessarily a new religious denomination; it can be assimilated by many religions. Once again it is the *colligite fragmenta* of our byword—that is, the unification of our lives, not in a monist sense as though everything were one and our goal already achieved, nor in a dualist sense as though true reality were in the future and in *another* life. The fragments are generated by a breakage: gathering them does not mean making them into a shapeless heap, but rather not losing them and not leaving out any fragment of reality. A symbol for what I have tried to express might be harmony rather than unity.

Cosmotheandric spirituality is perhaps the simplest and most ancient form of human religiosity. It is not just for the few, in the same way as mysticism is not a specialty for souls with parapsychological gifts. The third eye is not only the reserve of so-called holy people, though it does require purity of heart and the help of the other two eyes for the complete intuition of reality.

We have spoken about love for material things and human situations as bearers of a divine core that gives them value and dignity. This spirituality represents the synthesis of the three traditional pathways of action (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*), and awareness (*jñāna*). When a person does what they should do (*svadharma*) and does it with a pure heart, they discover in that action the fullness of reality. The ancient maxim that tells us to do everything with total dedication could be a way of summing up this spirituality. Things are things: Jesus let stones be stones and refused to change them into bread; in the tenth of Zen's classic vignettes, the farmer goes back to the market and to ordinary life;<sup>1</sup> in almost all works of mysticism the final level comes back to be like the first, but enlightened by a special light—a light that does not come so much from outside as from things themselves. In the Gospel, reward and punishment are given not for actions people did for Christ, but for themselves (Mt 25:37; 25:44).

Cosmotheandric spirituality is lived by living life in its fullness, and that is how we discover Life in life.

These are just some aspects of a spirituality that is emerging everywhere and that we have tried to outline in a few pages. We should emphasize once again that it is a personal experience that needs to be "reinforced" through life in this "pilgrimage" of ours through the "field" of reality.

<sup>1</sup> The Ten Oxherding Pictures.

At the twilight of the *cammin di nostra vita* we tend to see the world "sub specie aeternitatis" and we begin to see the relative nature of temporal and historical things. We know too much about psychology today to be seduced by the suspicion that this attitude is just one of self-consolation—albeit legitimate—to overcome the messianic dreams of our youth. After all, to retreat into interiority is natural at a mature age, and without this dimension human life has no meaning. Nevertheless one extreme does not justify the other.

This book is not about taking away hope, but it does not confuse hope with the expectation of a better future. Hope is the discovery of the dimension of reality that is invisible to the eyes of the body and the mind. Only the third eye, together with the other two and never on its own, opens us to a more complete vision that is the natural fruit of a tripartite anthropology.

At this moment, humanity's *kairos* does not allow us to dream of a "glorious" future or to take refuge in an idealized past, but rather it challenges us to face a tempiternal *present*. In this present, secularity plays an essential role in the life of man, although without falling into materialistic reductionism.

The author is well aware of the difficulties of presenting an idea that is new and at the same time traditional, but is also convinced that the topic is of capital importance. While he apologizes for the denseness of the text and for any imperfections, he can assure the reader that behind these pages is the living of a life that he would also wish to transmit.

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## GLOSSARY

All terms are Sanskrit unless otherwise specified.

*advaita*: a-dualism (*a-dvaita*). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with monism.

*advaitin*: followers of *advaita*, who profess *âtman-brahman* nonduality.

*aham*: "I," first-person pronoun. *Aham* as an ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from *ahamkāra* as a psychological principle.

*aham asmi*: "I am," a formula of spiritual creation or *mahāvākya*, deriving from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*.

*ahiṃsā*: "nonviolence," respect for life, not killing and not wounding, not desiring to carry out violence against reality. A moral and philosophical principle based on ultimate universal harmony. The root *hiṃs-* from *han-* means "to wound," "to kill." This is not exactly a Vedic notion—it appears only a few times in the *Upaniṣad*; it was developed in Jainism and Buddhism.

*anama*: ineffable and unnameable, beyond any designation.

*aneka*: adjective that qualifies all that is not one, all that does not constitute a single and unique entity.

*anubhava*: direct experience, knowledge deriving from immediate spiritual intuition.

*asti*: third-person singular of the present tense of the verb "to be," in Sanskrit.

*âtman*: principle of life, breath, the body, the Self (from the root *an*, to breathe). Refers to the whole, undivided person and also to the innermost center of man, his incorruptible nucleus, which in the *Upaniṣad* is shown to be identical to *Brahman*. The Self or inner essence of the universe and Man. Ontological center in Hinduism, which is negated in Buddhism.

*aupaniṣada*: adjective deriving from the noun *upaniṣad*, which means belonging to the sacred teachings contained in the 108 texts known under this name that are part of the Scriptures (*śruti*).

*avam âtman brahman*: "This *âtman* is *brahman*," formula of self-realization or *mahāvākya*, which derives from *Mandukya-upaniṣads*, meaning the uniqueness of the Absolute.

*bhakta*: officiant, devotee, he who follows the path of love for God and is completely submitted to the divine (see *bhakti*).

*bhakti*: devotion, submission, love for God, personal relationship with God, devotional mysticism. One of the paths of salvation through union with the divinity.



*bhakti-mārga*: the path of love and devotion, one of the three classical spiritual paths (see *karma-mārga*, *jñāna-mārga*).

*brahman*: prayer, sacrifice, the inherent power in sacrifice; the Absolute, the ultimate reason underlying all things; in the *Upaniṣad* it is identified with the immanent Self (*ātman*). Also, one of the four priests who perform the sacrifice or the clergy in general.

*dharma*: cosmic order, justice, duty, religious law, religious and social observances transmitted by tradition; "religion" as a collection of practices and laws. That which holds the world together. One of the four "human purposes" (see *puruṣārtha*).

*dharmakāya*: mystical body of *dharma* in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

*Ding as Sich* (Ger.): the thing-in-itself (Kantian term).

*dvandva*: pair of opposites, e.g., cold and heat, pleasure and pain.

*Egō eimī ho eimī* (Gr.): "I am who I am."

*Egō eimī ho on* (Gr.): "I am he who is."

*eidōlōthyton* (Gr.): sacrificial offering to idols, as opposed to *hierōthyton*.

*esti* (Gr.): third-person singular of the present indicative of the verb "to be," in Greek.

*Gītā*: song; *Bhagavad-gītā*: the "Song of the Glorious Lord," the "Song of the Sublime One," a famous ancient Indian didactic poem included in the *Mahābhārata* (often called the "New Testament of Hinduism"), the most well-known book in India.

*gohim* (Gr.): Gentiles, "pagan," not belonging to the revelation of Israel.

*Grund* (Ger.): ultimate foundation, basis of Being.

*hierōthyton*: sacred sacrificial offering, as opposed to *eidōlōthyton*.

*homeomorphism*: theory used in comparative religion to discover functional equivalence in two or more religions.

*Īśvara, Īśa*: the Lord, from the root *īś-*, to be lord, to guide, to possess. Although a generic term for Lord, in posterior religious systems it is more often used for Śiva than for Viṣṇu. In the *Vedānta* it is the manifested, qualified (*saguṇa*) aspect of Brahman.

*jīvanmukta*: "liberated while alive and embodied," the highest category of the holy or fulfilled person who has reached the destination in this life and, therefore, in the human body, he who has fulfilled his *ātman-brahman* ontological identity, he who has reached his own being, becoming totally integrated.

*jñāna*: knowledge (from the root *jñā-*, to know), intuition, wisdom; frequently the highest intuitive comprehension, the attaining of *ātman* or *brahman*. *Jñāna* is the result of meditation or revelation. See *jñāna-mārga*.

*jñāna-mārga*: the path of knowledge, contemplation, and intuitive vision; one of the three classic paths of spiritual experience, generally considered superior to those of *karman* and *bhakti*, although many *bhakta* regard *jñāna* as merely as form of *bhakti*.

*jñānin*: sage, wise man, one who follows the path of knowledge, wisdom, and contemplation (*jñāna-mārga*).

*kairos* (Gr.): time, opportune moment, crucial point at which the destiny changes phase, epoch.

*karma, karman*: lit. "act, deed, action," from the root *kr*, to act, to do; originally the sacred action, sacrifice, rite, later also moral act. The result of all actions and deeds according

to the law of *karman* that regulates actions and their results in the universe. Later also connected with rebirth, it indicates the link between the actions carried out by a subject and his destiny in the cycle of deaths and rebirths.

*karma-mārga*: the path of action; one of the three classic paths of spirituality (see *bhakti*; *jñāna*). In the *Vedas* it refers to sacrificial actions viewed as the way to salvation; later includes also moral actions, or all actions that are performed in a spirit of sacrifice.

*kenōsis* (Gr.): annihilation, emptying of oneself, overcoming of one's ego.

*koinōnia* (Gr.): community, communion.

*Kṛṣṇa*: *avatāra* of *Viṣṇu* (lit. "the black one"), and one of the most popular gods. He does not appear in the *Veda*, but he is the revealer of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the divine child and the shepherd God of *Vṛndāvana*, the incarnation of love and the playful god par excellence.

*logos* (Gr.): word, thought, judgment, reason. In the New Testament, Christ is the Word of God (Jn 1).

*mahāvākya*: "great saying." Refers to great expressions of the *Upaniṣad* that express very concisely the content of the experience of the Absolute.

*Mandūkya-upaniṣad*: probably after the preaching of the Buddha, it contains the doctrine of states of consciousness and their correlation with the degrees of Being represented by the syllable *Om*.

*metanoia* (Gr.): transformation, change of mentality or heart, conversion; going beyond (*meta*) the mental or rational (*nous*).

*nāma-rūpa*: "name and form," the phenomenic world that constitutes the *saṃsāra*.

*neti neti*: "not this, not this" (*na iti*), i.e., the negation of any kind of characterization of the *ātman* or *brahman* in the *Upaniṣad*; pure apophatism.

*nirguṇa-brahman*: *Brahman* without attributes and qualities, the unqualified, transcendent Absolute.

*nous* (Gr.): mind, thought, intellect, reason.

*oikouménē*: the universe as a domain of man.

*paleotestamentario* (Gr.): relating to the Old Testament.

*saguṇa-brahman*: *Brahman* with quality, corresponding in the Vedānta to *Īśvara*, the Lord.

*śruti*: "that which has been heard," the Vedic Revelation, an expression mainly used in sacred texts, *Veda*, and other authoritative Hindū Scriptures, which reveal to the human spirit the entire *corpus* of the *Veda* transmitted orally.

*tao* (or *dao* Chin.) / *da*: "way," a central concept in Chinese philosophy, especially Taoism.

*Tathāgata*: lit. "the one thus come, who has attained being, who has extinguished himself," an appellative of Buddha.

*theōreia* (Gr.): theory, originally in the sense of "contemplation."

*théosis* (Gr.): deification of man, by means of the Spirit.

*Torāh*: Jewish law contained in the Bible.

*turiya*: the fourth mental state spoken of in the *Mandūkya-upaniṣad*, which transcends the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, and in which the meditator attains the consciousness that can free him from all bonds.

*Upaniṣad*: fundamental sacred teaching in the form of texts constituting the end of the *Veda*; part of the revelation (*śruti*) and basis of posterior Hindū thought.

*Vedānta*: lit. "end of the *Veda*," i.e., the *Upaniṣad* as the climax of Vedic wisdom. In the sense of *Uttaramīmāṃsā* or *Vedāntavāda*, a system of Indian philosophy (*Advaita-vedānta*, *Dvaita-vedānta*, etc.) based on the *Upaniṣad*, which teaches a spiritual interpretation of the *Veda*; one of the last schools of Hindū philosophical thought, of which the most renowned representatives include Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he was part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar held degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. He delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for Intercultural Dialogue, he also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of the Balearic Islands in 1997, the University of Tübingen in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades for his book *El concepto de naturaleza* in Madrid in 1946 to the Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo in Italy.

Panikkar lived in Tavertet in the Catalanian mountains, where he continued his contemplative experience and cultural activities from 1982 until his death on August 26, 2010. There he founded and presided over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he is a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of *colligite fragmenta* as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodies a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are: *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973); *Worship and Secular Man* (1973); *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1981); *The Silence of God* (1989); *The Rhythm of Being* (1989); *Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993); and *Christophany* (2004).